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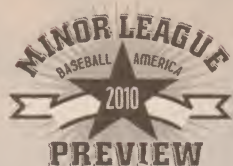
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NEXT ISSUE

Let's play two! Or at least extend our Minor League Preview into a second issue. Part Two will include reports from each classification, including a look at a low Class A Rome team expected to be chock full of prospects. We'll keep you up to date with the latest news, and profile many of the sport's rising stars with dispatches from a variety of spring training camps.

ASK BA

BY JIM CALLIS

DEBUT ON HOLD

Outfielder Jared Mitchell, the White Sox' No. 1 prospect and their first-round pick in the 2009 draft, may miss the entire season after tearing a tendon in his left ankle. I know there are plenty of pitchers who get injured and miss their first full season after signing, but how often does this happen with hitters? Can you think of anyone else this has happened to, and how did they perform after the injury?

RICHARD GAUGER, MARSHFIELD, MASS.

Pitchers do succumb to injury more than hitters. Scanning through some recent Prospect Handbooks, I found several pitchers who were first-round or sandwich picks, got hurt after signing and missed their first full pro seasons: Jon Bachanov, Kenny Baugh, Brad Lincoln, Tyler Lumsden, Bryan Morris, Cory Rasmus, Joe Saunders, Nick Schmidt and Wade Townsend. (Michael Ynoa, whose \$4.25 million bonus in 2008 set a record for an international amateur, also missed his first full season.)

I came up with just three position players who were drafted that high and lost their first full pro season to injury: Landon Powell, Scott Thorman and Matt Whitney. None of those three could come close to matching Mitchell's athleticism, and none have had much of an impact.

Powell, the 24th overall pick in 2004 by the Athletics, injured his left knee during offseason workouts in January 2005 and required surgery. The catcher tore up the same knee again in July 2007 and didn't make it to Oakland until last season, when he hit .229/.297/.429 as a 28-year-old backup.

The Braves selected Thorman 30th overall in 2000, and the first baseman lost 2001 to shoulder surgery. The injury didn't derail him much, as he bounced back in 2002 to lead the low Class A South Atlantic League with 38 doubles and rank second with 57 extra-base hits. Thorman did slug his way to the majors, but he hit just .222/.260/.407 in parts of two seasons with Atlanta.

After the Indians drafted him 33rd overall in 2002, Whitney hit 10 homers in 45 games at Rookie-level Burlington. But the third baseman stepped on a water sprinkler in spring training and broke his left leg, which needed multiple operations. His recovery was slow, and while he did hit 32 homers between two Class A stops in 2007, he's 26 and has yet to reach the majors.

Mitchell's injury, which he sustained crashing into the outfield wall in a big league exhibition against the Cubs, is particularly worrisome on two fronts. His electric speed is a huge part of his game, and it remains to be seen if he'll be slowed in the future. Secondly, because he divided his first two years at Louisiana State between baseball and football, he has far less experience than most 22-year-olds who played at major college programs. While he's very talented, Mitchell will need a lot of repetitions on offense and defense to reach his ceiling.

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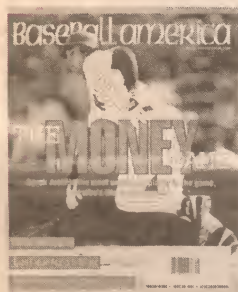
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COVER PHOTO: CLIFF WELCH

FROM THE archives

MAY 24
1998



» IN THIS ISSUE: Florida State coach Mike Martin and Illinois coach Itch Jones reach the 1,000-win plateau within 90 minutes of each other.

» ALSO: Cape Fear Crocs (Expos) set a South Atlantic League record after 15-0 start.

In our current issue, we follow the money all the way down to the minor leagues by examining the average salaries of the players you go watch play and the staff who tries to make your visit to the ballpark pleasant SEE PAGE 16. The last time we broke down salaries was on the big league level, as *The Money Game* cover indicates. There we looked at some of the best (and strangest) incentive clauses, the most overpaid and underpaid players, and the average salary for each position on the diamond.

Below is a look at the rising trend of paying players before they become arbitration eligible:

The Indians get credit for coming up with the blueprint before the 1992 season.

Up to that point, a baseball team's attitude toward players without enough major league service time to qualify for salary arbitration was pretty simple: to hell with 'em. Teams tended to take the position that the players would have the negotiation hammer soon enough.

The Tribe and general manager John Hart took a different approach. The Indians signed a dozen players to multiyear contracts before they were eligible for arbitration. Some, like Sandy Alomar Jr., Carlos Baerga and Charles Nagy, went on to become key players on championship teams. Others, like Jack Armstrong, Dennis Cook and Mark Whiten, didn't. But the mold had been broken.

It took a couple of years for the Indians' approach to become a trend. But there is little doubt that this has become an accepted way of doing business in baseball.

Sox prospect's career put on hold after brain surgery

BY ALEX SPEIER

FORT MYERS, FLA.

While top Red Sox prospect Ryan Westmoreland's ability led to a rapid rise to prominence, his playing career was rendered a secondary concern shortly after the start of spring training.

Numbness and headaches forced Westmoreland to take a medical leave on March 4. He was diagnosed the next day with a cavernous malformation in his brain, and after consultations with three neurological experts, he had surgery in Phoenix under the supervision of Dr. Robert Spetzler of the Barrow Neurological Institute to remove the angioma—a benign tumor of blood vessels—from his brain stem on March 16.

The news came as a shock to the organization, which has seen two players—Jon Lester and Anthony Rizzo—achieve inspirational recoveries from cancer in recent years. However, the specter of brain surgery seemed more ominous even than those illnesses.

"I don't know what he's going through, but I can relate to what he's going through. I told him to stay strong for his family," said Rizzo, who was treated for Hodgkin's Lymphoma in 2008. "(But) it's a lot different, what he's going through.

"I kind of knew what to expect with what I went through. With this surgery, he has no idea what's on the other side."

Given the potentially grave consequences of the condition, the initial reports after the surgery were taken as promising. The Sox released a statement declaring the five-hour procedure a success, while also acknowledging that the Rhode Island native would stay in intensive care. The statement also said that he

faced "a difficult period initially before beginning his recovery."

As such, the team and medical staff that performed the procedure planned to monitor Westmoreland for at least a few days before assessing his condition. According to ESPN.com, the procedure carried some risks to motor function and vision, and an immediate determination of any such concerns was not available.

Still, Sox coaches, officials and players emphasized that the initial reports from the surgery were promising.

"It sounds like very encouraging news," manager Terry Francona said. "We're obviously thrilled about that, and thankful."

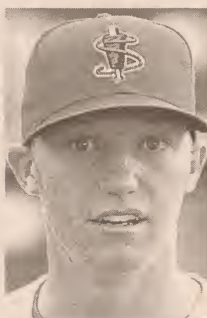
Uncertain Future

Members of the organization tried to remain guarded in their reactions, mindful that Westmoreland's condition won't become entirely clear for some time. He will face a long and likely arduous recovery.

"(The diagnosis) was definitely shocking. I feel like it hit me, too, just realizing that I've been through that," Rizzo said. "I don't know what his process will be, but it's a long way back."

While around his minor league teammates and before he was sent on a medical leave from the club, Westmoreland had remained in excellent spirits, even as he was dealing with the symptoms of his condition. The way in which he handled the situation further underscored to Westmoreland's teammates that there are far greater concerns than the outfielder's baseball future.

"He's such an unbelievable person, on and off the field. He's such a great talent. He deserves to live a great life. Hopefully he'll come out of all of this in the best way," said Sox prospect Ryan Kalish, who befriended Westmoreland this offseason. "Really, it's not about baseball right now. It's about the quality of life. If he comes out of this and plays baseball, it will be an amazing story. But as long as he comes out of this, whatever he does, it will be a success."



Ryan Westmoreland

KEN BABBITT

Braun, Fielder keep home runs brewing



Jerry Crasnick

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PHOENIX

One is black, the other white. One swings from the right side of the plate, the other from the left.

One roams an outfield corner, while the other plays a corner infield spot. And one provides the optimal blend of power and hitting acumen in the No. 3 hole in the order, while the other pelts

the bleacher seats with baseballs as the quintessential cleanup man.

If this were the 1950s or '60s, we'd be discussing the relative merits of Hank Aaron and Eddie Mathews. Take the same personal profiles, rearrange a few particulars and slap a retractable roof over the proceedings, and the conversation just as easily applies to Prince Fielder and Ryan Braun.

The only constants are home runs, RBIs and the letter "M" on the front of the cap.

Baseball fans in Milwaukee are conditioned to moderate expectations after enjoying only two winning seasons since 1993, but they're fortunate to be watching something special: Two homegrown sluggers with gaudy portfolios and a synergy that transcends generations.

"I think the names we hear more often are Robin Yount and Paul Molitor," Braun said. "That comparison is more relevant and closer to our time. But you definitely hear both pairs of guys grouped together."

"I don't think Prince and I are anywhere close to that, but it's great that people recognize that we've accomplished some pretty special things together."

Quite A Pair

Bill James has certainly noticed. In his new book, he lists the 20 "most valuable properties" among the game's young players, and Felix Hernandez, Fielder, Hanley Ramirez and Braun take up the top four spots.

So far, at least, Fielder and Braun are putting up numbers quite comparable to the production that Aaron and Mathews generated in their early years together. In three full seasons with the Brewers from 2007 through 2009, the teammates averaged a combined 78 home runs and 226 RBIs per season, with a slugging percentage of .575. Aaron and Mathews, in contrast, averaged 73 homers, 219 RBIs and .564 during a peak five-year run with the Braves from 1957 through 1961.

Beyond the numbers, Braun and Fielder perform with a zest and a swagger that resonate with the general populace. They've

helped the Brewers surpass 3 million in attendance in each of the past two seasons.

"They're elite offensive players, and they're not even five years into the league," Brewers infielder Craig Counsell said. "It really forms the core of what you're trying to do as a team. It makes us an offensive team right away when you put those two guys in the middle."

Fulfilling Expectations

Fielder arrived with a special burden because of his famous father, Cecil, and stories of his home run exploits as a 12-year-old taking batting practice at Tiger Stadium. When the Brewers chose him with the seventh pick in the 2002 draft, few people questioned his ability to produce. The biggest issue, as Fielder knocked down fences in Ogden, Beloit, Huntsville and Nashville, was his ability to keep his weight under control.

It's time to scratch that concern. Fielder has missed 12 of a possible 648 games over the past four seasons, and last year he was the only player in the majors to play all 162 games.

Although Fielder miffed the purists with his celebratory act last September against the Giants—when he untucked his shirt after a game-winning homer, then stomped on home plate as teammates fell around him like bowling pins—there's a certain throwback appeal to his game. He might be the only major leaguer with a more ferocious swing than Matt Stairs.

As fun as it is to watch Fielder crank, Braun derives just as much enjoyment from watching his buddy bust it down the line.

"I love seeing him try to leg out an infield single," Braun said. "He runs hard to first base every time, and there aren't a lot of power hitters who do that. They say they do, but they don't."

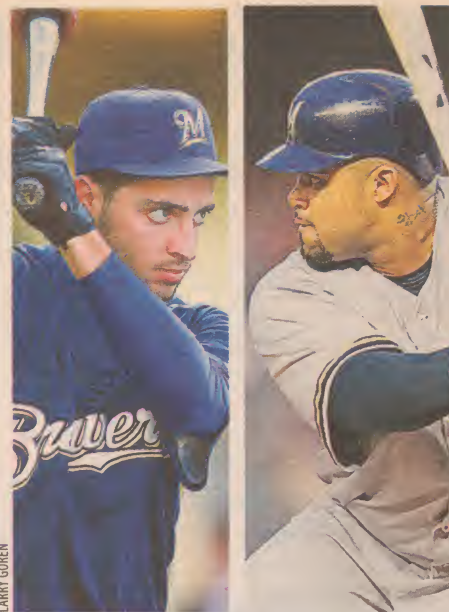
Like Fielder, Braun arrived in pro ball with hype to spare. He was a first team All-America and a Golden Spikes Award finalist at Miami, and the fifth overall draft pick in a loaded 2005 first round that included Justin Upton, Ryan Zimmerman and Troy Tulowitzki.

Braun has always carried himself with a self-assurance that some people might call brash. But that never fazed Fielder.

"People might take him as cocky, but to me he's just being honest," Fielder said. "Anytime a guy comes out and is sure of himself, what's not to like about it? He was confident, but wasn't overbearing by any means in my eyes. I'd rather have a guy be super-confident than be scared."

Long-Term Prospects

For Brewers fans, the biggest question is how long the team's 3-4 combination will remain intact. Before the arrival of Marvin Miller and Scott Boras, Fielder's agent, power-



Will dueling sluggers Ryan Braun (left) and Prince Fielder stay together in Milwaukee?

hitting tandems stayed together until their bat speed waned and their Hall of Fame status was secure.

Aaron and Mathews were teammates from 1954 through 1966. Willie Mays and Willie McCovey played together for 14 years. Ernie Banks and Billy Williams were fellow Cubs from 1959 through '71, and Roberto Clemente and Willie Stargell spent a decade together in Pittsburgh.

These days, synergy is a more fleeting proposition. Although Braun is signed to a club-friendly eight-year, \$45 million deal through 2015, Fielder is about to receive the breathless, Adrian Gonzalez treatment on Internet chat boards. He's under contract for \$10.5 million this season and will have one year of salary arbitration left before he's eligible for free agency in 2011.

"You'd love to stay, but it's a business, and it has to play out how it has to play out," Fielder said. "Hopefully I can be here for 30 years, but it's not something I'm going to stress out about."

Braun won't sweat Fielder's contract updates, either, although it's crossed his mind that the guy who casts such an ominous shadow in the on-deck circle might not be around forever.

"As a teammate, I don't think there's anybody we can replace Prince with who could give us as good an opportunity to win as he does," Braun said. "I realize how fortunate I've been and how much he's helped me."

"Ultimately we would love to keep him here, but I think everybody kind of recognizes the situation. He needs to do whatever is in his best interests and the best interests of his family."

Double trouble has been a way of life for Brewers' opponents since 2007. Will Fielder and Braun forge a long-term partnership, or pursue parallel Hall of Fame tracks in separate destinations?

The "M" word that will ultimately determine the answer to that question doesn't stand for "Milwaukee."

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Together again: Fuson and Beane reunite in Oakland

BY CASEY TEFERTILLER

OAKLAND

The first call Grady Fuson received when he separated from the Padres came from an old friend, of sorts: Billy Beane. A few weeks later, Fuson was back with the A's organization.

This may seem surprising after the Moneyball wars that erupted after the 2003 publication of Michael Lewis' big-selling book that depicted general manager Beane as baseball's genius of the future while portraying Fuson and his scouting corps as out-of-date old-liners. The portrayals angered many around baseball, including Fuson.

"When the book came out, Billy and I discussed it like men," said Fuson, then the A's scouting director. "When I got ready to fire a shot across the bow, I let him know."

That shot took the form of a statement from Fuson in the San Francisco Chronicle: "This (book) makes him look like a mad scientist, and if that's how he wants to be perceived, that's what he's accountable for."

Fuson made his comments, "and then it was over," Fuson said. "The only negativity was there's so many people in and out of the game of baseball that don't understand the process behind it." Fuson said many of the statements did not accurately reflect the beliefs of Beane or other members of the A's front office.

Fuson left the A's after the 2001 season to become the Rangers' assistant GM, hoping it would lead to the GM job, which it never did. After the 2004 season, he became the Padres' vice president of scouting and player development. All the while, he remained in contact with Beane, quietly resuming a friendship after the public outbursts.

Fuson was let go when the Padres did a housecleaning under new GM Jed Hoyer at the end of last season.

Beane called immediately.

"Billy's treated me great. He's really made me feel respected," Fuson said.

Fuson's new role in Oakland will be special adviser to baseball operations. "I'll spend a lot of time helping (scouting director) Eric (Kubota) crosschecking the draft, spend a lot of time with (farm director) Keith (Lieppman) in development. I'll give Lip another set of eyes.

"This is perfect for me. My two passions in the game are scouting and development, and to be able to come back and do it with people I've worked with before is a great situation . . . It's almost like I haven't missed anything since I left. Everybody's on the same page."

Fuson spent 19 years with the A's, the last seven as scouting director. He had a big run on draft selections, picking Eric Chavez, Mark Mulder, Barry Zito and Tim Hudson. The Athletics are hopeful of capturing the old magic.

PERSPECTIVE | Paul Trap

paultrap@BaseballAmerica.com



MLB tabs Alderson to lead Dominican reform

BY BEN BADLER

Major League Baseball hired Sandy Alderson as a consultant to focus on reforming the operations in the Dominican Republic.

As chairman of a committee last year that included several general managers, Alderson submitted a report in September to commissioner Bud Selig with recommendations on how to reform the league's operations in the Dominican Republic. Alderson will now help implement those recommendations, which he said will eventually have an impact on other Latin American countries as well.

Alderson, the Padres CEO from 2005 until March 2009, was MLB's executive vice president of baseball operations from September 1998-April 2005, and previously spent 17 years with the Athletics, including 1983-1997 as general manager. He highlighted four key areas that MLB will attempt to reform:

- Age and identity fraud
- Use of performance-enhancing drugs
- How teams conduct business there
- Internal structure and oversight of operations of MLB's office in Santo Domingo

"The problems are broad and significant, but we certainly can improve how we operate there and come a long way toward, not eradicating, but significantly reducing these kinds of frauds and abuses," Alderson said.

Alderson has started by dismissing Ronaldo

Peralta, who headed the office in the Dominican Republic and had been there since 2001. The office opened in 2000, but the responsibilities of the office have developed significantly over the last decade.

MLB has already devoted more resources—both in terms of an increased budget and additional personnel—to its operations in the Dominican Republic, including the department of investigations, which is responsible for conducting players' background checks.

However, MLB can do little to regulate buscones, the independent workers who train and represent players in Latin America.

"That will certainly be a focus of our attention," Alderson said. "In some ways, the buscones are a positive aspect of the development of players and talent in the Dominican Republic, but the way in which that development takes place is so fraught with massive abuse that we decided what we had to do was to convince them that they could be a part of the solution."

Teams have also come under criticism in Latin America after scouts and executives have been linked to bonus skimming.

"There's no question there has to be a different mindset," Alderson said. "What happens is the competition is so fierce in the Dominican Republic for the talent there, and the market there is so loose, that these kinds of abuses result—it shouldn't be a surprise to anybody."

IN SHORT | PEPPER

INTERNATIONAL DRAFT COULD BE A SOLUTION

Don't rule out the possibility of an international draft as a way to solve the corruption that has tainted baseball in the Dominican Republic. So says **Sandy Alderson**, Major League Baseball's new Dominican Republic consultant.

An international draft may not be within the scope of Alderson's authority, but it is a possibility to come up in negotiations for the next Collective Bargaining Agreement after the 2011 season.

Alderson recognizes that the situation in the Dominican Republic is different from when Puerto Rico became a part of the draft in 1990, yet similar abuses were among the reasons Puerto Rico was absorbed into the draft.

"The kinds of problems that exist in the Dominican Republic are exactly the kinds of problems that would lead Major League Baseball to adopt an international draft," Alderson said.

"Now, there are lots of other considerations involved as well. It would be an international draft, not a Dominican Republic draft. That's not to say that the (collective bargaining) negotiations in 2011 will result in an international draft, but when there are problems that are so extensive, as they are in the Dominican Republic, it causes people to think in those terms."

WHITE SOX' MITCHELL MAY MISS SEASON

Jared Mitchell, the White Sox' first-round pick in 2009, could miss the 2010 season after crashing into a wall in a spring training game. He underwent surgery to repair a tear of the tendon in his left ankle.

Mitchell, 21, who helped Louisiana State to the 2009 College World Series championship, ranked No. 55 on BA's Top 100 last month and ranked as the White Sox' No. 1 prospect this offseason. The 23rd overall pick last June made an impressive catch up against the wall on a long drive by the Angels' Juan Rivera.

White Sox manager **Ozzie Guillen** said Mitchell could miss the entire season.

"It's supposed to be about a year," he said. "We have to wait to see after surgery happens. Hopefully, everything goes well. The more important thing after that is the rehab, and hopefully, he'll get back pretty quick. We'll see what happens."

SUSPENSIONS UPDATE

Four Dominican Summer League players were each suspended for 50 games after testing positive for substances in violation of the Minor League Drug Prevention and Treatment Program.

They were: Righthanders **Israel Tolentino** (Yankees) and **Melvin Colon** (Mets), catcher **Josue Rodriguez** (Yankees) and outfielder **Steven Lebron** (Indians).



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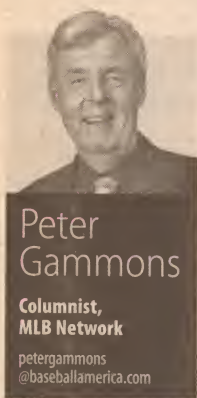
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Hard-nosed Heyward impresses with a smile



Peter Gammons

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KISSIMMEE, FLA.

The question put to the Braves' Jason Heyward was whether being the new "new" thing of the 2010 season was at all uncomfortable—with his veteran teammates or his fellow minor leaguers or his manager, Bobby Cox.

Or with comparisons, as the phenom has been likened to

Willie McCovey. And Willie Stargell.

"The (Darryl) Strawberry comparison isn't right. I'd say Fred McGriff," Cox chimed in.

Astros manager Brad Mills asked Cox, "When did you get Cliff Floyd?" Mills later added, "In five years he's Dave Parker."

Mills went on about the line drive off the bat of Heyward that his second baseman reached for—only to see it rocket off the right-center field fence.

"It's been great, because I love to play," said Heyward, the 20-year-old who stands at 6-foot-6 and a lean 245 pounds—up from the 210 he weighed when the Braves drafted him 14th overall out of a Georgia high school in 2007. "There have been no problems. Everyone has been wonderful to me. Veteran players couldn't be more supportive.

"I love to play. I love to play hard. I try to play the right way. I was brought up by parents who taught me to treat everyone with respect, to treat them the way I want to be treated. It's a simple way to go about life, but my parents taught me that from an early age."

"Not only is he the real deal," veteran teammate Brian McCann said, "but he's the real deal off the field. Everyone loves him. Man, does he play hard."

"This kid," Eric "Mr. October" Hinske said, "isn't real. He might be the best 20-year-old ever."

"I saw him when he was a freshman in high school (at Henry County High in McDonough, Ga., 35 miles south of Atlanta)," Braves scout Brian Bridges said. "I was there to see a pitcher (teammate Mike Rozier, who got \$1.5 million from the Red Sox after being drafted in 2004 and never panned out), and (Heyward) jumped out at me. He was 6-foot, maybe 6-foot-1, lean body, but he could really hit. Jason always was a hitter, a pure hitter. Disciplined. Then he got huge."

"But I'll never forget being at the Perfect Game Showcase in Florida the summer before his senior year, and I told him to slow down, pace himself from playing so hard all the time. He looked at me and said, 'Mr. Bridges, I always play hard. There's no other way to play.' Great parents. There's a lot to be said for scouting families, be it Derek Jeter or Joe Mauer or Dustin Pedroia or whoever."

Strength In Family

There is no chance involved with Heyward. This is all about being raised by Eugene and Laura Heyward.

"When I was coming out of high school, I had a full ride to UCLA for baseball," Heyward said. "But I've got a lot to thank Dartmouth for."

It was in Hanover, N.H., that Laura, a French major who spent her junior year in Paris, met Eugene, an engineering major who was also on the Dartmouth basketball team.

Eugene's coach, Gary Walters, was on the 1964-65 Princeton team with Bill Bradley that finished third in the country. One of Eugene's best friends in college was Jimmie Lee Solomon, MLB's vice president of baseball operations.

Laura was raised in Queens, N.Y. Eugene was born into a military family in Beaufort, S.C., and when his parents divorced, they sent him to Los Angeles to live with his uncle and attend a private school. That uncle was Kenny Washington, who was the sixth man on the 1963-64 and 1964-65 UCLA national championship basketball teams, John Wooden's first two championship teams.

"I was able to spend a lot of free time at Pauley Pavilion, working out, playing with Kareem and Marquis Johnson and guys like that," the elder Heyward said. "It was fantastic. Dartmouth recruited me, and I was really excited, and was able to go back East so I could visit my father."

Understand Eugene Heyward's family. His grandfather always made him say "please" and "thank you" and attend to civility.

"His favorite expressions were 'books before basketball' and 'academics before athletics,'" Eugene said.

When that grandfather retired from the military at the age of 66, he went back to high school and got his diploma. Eugene's mother got her graduate degree at the age of 34.

After Eugene received his graduate degree in electrical engineering from Dartmouth in 1982, he and Laura lived in New York. Jason was born in 1989, and when he was 2 years old, the family moved to McDonough. Eugene worked for ITT Industries on the Warner Robins Air Force Base and Laura eventually became a systems analyst for Georgia Power.

"I never wanted Jason to play basketball," Eugene said. "My first love was baseball, and he took to it before he was 6."

Eugene coached Little League with a man named Ricky Archer, who Eugene said "taught us all the fundamentals—throwing, catching the ball the right way, bunting, taking secondary leads."

When Jason was 8 years old, his team won the AABC national title after busing 18 hours to Colorado for the tournament. Then, from the ages of 9 to 13, Eugene was his coach.

"It was great, because almost all of the dozen kids were from our church," Eugene said. "We'd raise money any way we could. I remember the kids standing along the side of I-75 selling donuts. We were called Georgia Nitro, and we were in the WABC championships every year. Jason pitched, played first."

Enjoy The Game

The father-and-son pair would go to Braves games together, and Eugene would say such things as, "Look at that secondary lead."

Jason would remind his father to just enjoy the game.

Every year until his son signed with Atlanta in 2007, Eugene would ask, "Do you still love playing?"

Jason always said yes, and Eugene would remind his son to every day ask himself, "Am I who I want to be?"

When Jason was finished with Little League, Eugene enrolled him in one of the nation's finest amateur programs, East Cobb. That required sacrifice.

Eugene's commute to Warner-Robbins was 90 minutes each way, so he'd get up at 3 a.m. to get to work between 5:30 and 6.



The comparisons, from Fred McGriff to Cliff Floyd, have not daunted Jason Heyward this spring

He'd get out of work at 1 p.m., drive back to McDonough, pick up Jason and drive another 90 minutes in the opposite direction to the East Cobb practice. One condition: Jason had to do his homework in the car to and from practice.

During Jason's senior year in high school, he was told by his father that his college tuition had been spent on baseball, so he needed to get a scholarship. No problem. Many schools were interested, but the family connections prompted UCLA to offer a full ride. Washington, now in law enforcement helping inner-city kids work their way out of gangs, would be a familial influence if and when Jason moved to Los Angeles.

The scholarship was never necessary.

Patience Pays Off

Looking back, what is amazing is that Heyward lasted until the 14th pick of the 2007 draft.

"A lot of scouts came in (to see Heyward play), and he got walked so much, many of them thought he wasn't aggressive enough swinging the bat," Bridges said.

But that discipline is one of the things that will make Heyward's jump to the big leagues easier. Early in spring training, he had five walks, one homer, five hits and one strikeout in 12 plate appearances, and Cox says that one strikeout came on two bad calls.

Heyward is quickly becoming part of Atlanta's baseball lore, so unlike the situation with Tommy Hanson last spring, it is going to be very difficult for the Braves to send him to the minors to start the season—especially given their need for outfield power.

"He plays defense," Cox said. "He throws. He is a great baserunner . . . He does everything, and he does it fundamentally sound."

But, perhaps most important, he's Laura and Eugene Heyward's son.

Rising Stars

Part of the joy of spring training is searching out the Jason Heywards rising toward the game's highest level, and finding among them talented young players whose passion elevates them. One such player is Pirates rookie Tony Sanchez, the No. 4 overall pick in last year's draft.

"I think I was the happiest person in the world when I was told to get in there," Sanchez said of his spring training debut in March, which included a home run, a great

throw on a steal and another rocket on a bunt.

"Sanchez is going to be catching for this team for a long time," Pirates pitching coach Joe Kerrigan said.

Phillies manager Charlie Manuel has become attached to rookie outfielder Tyson Gillies, acquired in the offseason Cliff Lee deal with the Mariners.

"He plays like Pete Rose," Manuel said.

Gillies homered in early March, and he ran so hard that scouts clocked him at 4.1 seconds to first and 16.5 seconds around the bases.

"I've never seen anything like that," Manuel said.

People never stop talking about 20-year-old Cuban Jose Iglesias in Boston because of his hands, his energy, his intelligence, his mastering of the English language in months. They believe Iglesias is going to hit. They have a device to measure bat speed; Iglesias is second on the team, after Pedroia. They tested his sight; his eyes are the best on the team.

"He's going to be a star," one Boston official said, "and people will love him because he loves the game so much."

Those are great stories, and there will be miles and miles of hype about Stephen Strasburg's three home starts in Washington (ka-ching) before he is sent to the minors.

But the story of spring training right now is of a kid whose father drove six hours a day so his son could play with the best youth baseball program in the South.

"I cannot express how proud I was this weekend watching Jason play for the Braves," Eugene said in early March. "My grandfather would have been really proud."

That same grandfather got out of the military at the age of 66 and earned his high school degree. The grandfather's great-grandson has the genes of UCLA national championships and the fiber of generations who were taught to look in the mirror and ask, "Am I who I want to be?"

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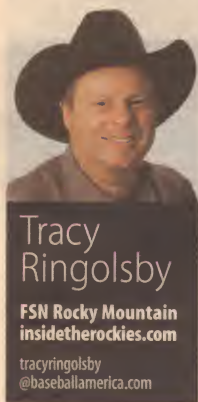


Top 100 Jason Heyward

edged Nationals righthander Stephen Strasburg on our Top

100 Prospects list; view the complete list here. www.baseballamerica.com/today/prospects

Rushed pitchers have little success



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SURPRISE, ARIZ.

The temptation is there. Can Washington resist?

The Nationals are not going to win the National League East or the wild card—sorry if that bursts anybody's bubble—whether Stephen Strasburg starts the season in the rotation or in the minor leagues. With that in mind, the Nationals

need to err on the side of caution.

Manager Jim Riggleman sounds as if he is committed to letting Strasburg idle in the minors, at least to open the season.

Strasburg might be one of their five best pitchers in spring training, but is he really going to make a difference in 2010? Not in Washington. The Nationals have to look at what's going to be best for the next decade, not next month.

And history does not bode well for rushing pitchers to the big leagues.

There have been 10 pitchers taken in the draft, which began in 1965, who debuted in the big leagues. The most successful was Burt Hooton, and he was quickly sent to the minors after making his pro debut with the Cubs.

Hooton, who came out of Texas in 1971, wound up with a 151-136 record in a major league career that stretched through 1985.

Mike Morgan, a first-round pick of the Athletics in 1978, survived—spending 23 years in the big leagues—but it wasn't easy. Like teammate Tim Lincecum, also signed out of that draft, he went from high school to the big leagues. Morgan played for a record 12 teams, finally making the all-star team in 1991, when he also enjoyed a winning record for the first time.

Conroy, taken 20th overall, 16 selections after Morgan, wound up appearing in 135 games, spread over seven big league seasons.

The most painful of the 10 was Darren Dreifort, the Dodgers' consolation prize in 1993, going second overall in the draft after Seattle took Alex Rodriguez with the first pick. Prolonged negotiations delayed Dreifort's debut until the next April. His big league career spanned 11 years, but resulted in only 48 wins, along with 60 losses, and a 4.36 ERA. Dreifort was plagued by injuries, and recently had his 22nd surgery since leaving Wichita State.

Jim Abbott, who went directly to the Angels' major league roster when he came out of Michigan in 1989 despite having been born without a right hand, was solid in his first three years. He couldn't sustain the success, however. After going 40-37 to begin his big league effort he was 47-71 the rest of his career.

David Clyde was a victim of former Rangers owner Bob Short's desperation for a draw at Arlington Stadium. The hard-throwing Clyde went right from Westchester (Texas) High to the big leagues. Unable to handle the lifestyle at such a young age, Clyde's career was done in five years, during which he was 18-33, 4.63.

Eddie Bane came out of college the same year that Clyde signed, and Twins owner Calvin Griffith wasn't about to be outdone by longtime nemesis Short. As a result, Bane went directly from Arizona State to the big leagues. He pitched parts of only three seasons in the big leagues, going 7-13, 4.61.

Steve Dunning made 50 appearances in the big leagues, going 12-23 with Cleveland, before making his minor league debut in 1972. His career spanned nine seasons, ending with a 1978 stop at Triple-A Hawaii.

Pete Broberg was Washington's first-round pick in 1971 off the Dartmouth campus. He never had a winning record but also never spent a day in the minor leagues, going 41-71, 4.56 in eight big league seasons.

Mike Adamson was the first pitcher to make the jump, going from Southern California to the Orioles in 1967. His career consisted of 11 games spread over three seasons. He was 0-4, 7.46, and there was speculation that Adamson actually hurt his arm before signing with the Orioles.

Around The Majors

White Sox general manager Kenny Williams shrugs off the questions about why he would make a waiver claim on outfielder Alex Rios, who has \$58.7 million coming over the next five years. Bottom line, said Williams, is Rios is only 29 and still has potential. The fact he was struggling last year is the only reason he was available, and while it cost the White Sox money, they didn't have to give up any prospects to land Rios, who hit 56 home runs with

246 RBIs from 2006-08.

"I could have given up (prospects) and brought down the amount of the contracts we assumed, but I didn't want to give up the players," Williams said. "It's my job and (assistant general manager) Rick Hahn's job to make the budget work. If we aren't worried about (the salary), why should everyone else be?"


The Reds see their \$33.25 million guarantee for Cuban defector Aroldis Chapman as a bargain, too. Chapman's deal is the biggest ever given to an amateur player. The Reds, however, didn't have to shortchange their payroll or scouting department to come up with the financial package.

"The structure of the contract is such that we have it spread out over a period of time and it does not impact negatively on any particular year," general manager Walt Jocketty said. "One criticism we received was, why didn't we spend \$30 million to help the big league club this year. Truth is it doesn't work that way. This is a long-term investment that we believe will have a long-term return."




Jim Abbott went straight to the Angels major league roster after being drafted

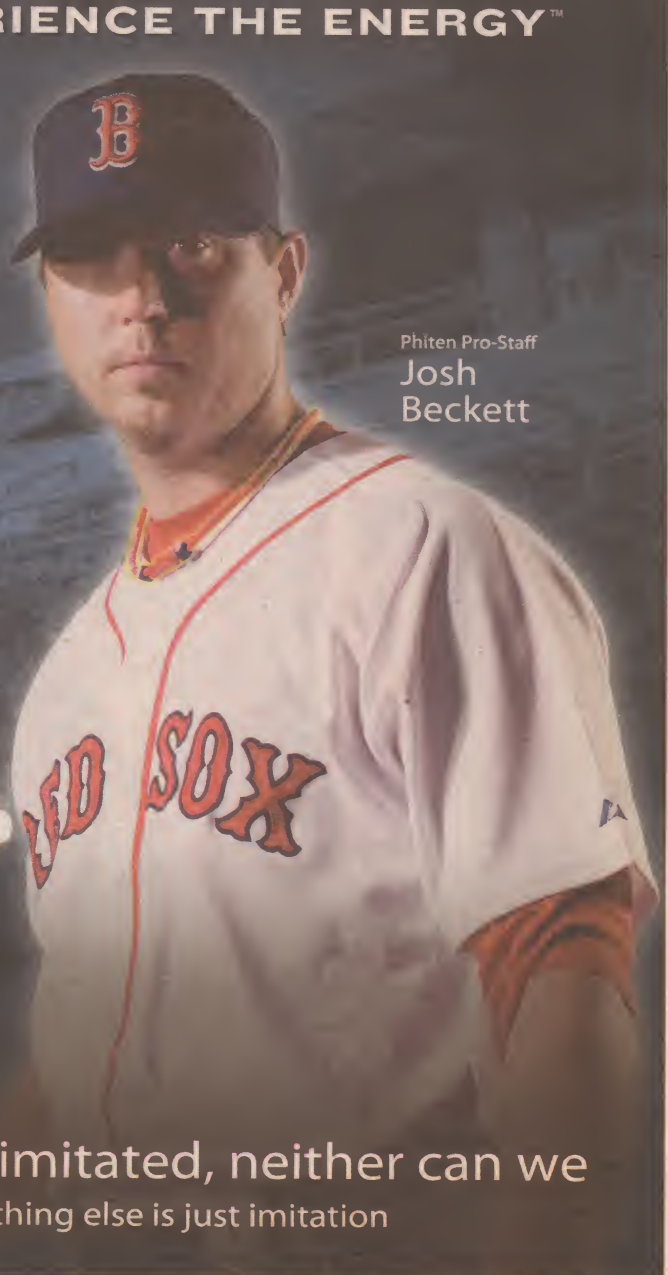
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Will this be Portland's final Opening Day?



Will Lingo

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Minor league teams dutifully crank out press releases as Opening Day approaches each year. The Portland Beavers are no exception.

"Beavers single-game tix on sale soon"

"Beavers unveil promotional schedule"

What the Beavers have not been able to do is figure out what they're going to be doing after this season.

For whatever reasons, the great Pacific Coast League baseball renaissance in Portland has never taken hold. The PCL had a franchise in Portland for the better part of the 20th century, but the old Beavers franchise moved to

Salt Lake City after the 1993 season.

A Northwest League franchise owned by Jack and Mary Cain stepped into ancient Civic Stadium (which opened in 1926) and became a huge success, annually drawing more than 200,000 fans. That's unheard of in the Northwest League and rare in any short-season league. The Cains were beloved in Portland and the franchise won Baseball America's Freitas Award in 1999, recognizing it as one of the best in the minor leagues.

But this being America, success on a small scale dictated that it had to be extrapolated to a much bigger scale. A new ownership group bought the PCL's Calgary franchise with plans to move it to Portland, and sold the city on a \$40 million renovation to Civic Stadium that would update it and turn it into a venue for both baseball and professional soccer.

Things didn't go as planned.



PGE Park brought Triple-A baseball back to Portland in 2001, but things haven't gone as planned

Searching For Success

The newly renovated stadium, now known as PGE Park, debuted in 2001 with the all-new Portland Beavers taking the field. The Beavers drew more than 400,000 fans for their first three seasons, which put them in the middle of the pack in PCL attendance, but the team was crippled by a huge amount of debt from financing the stadium deal, which included the purchase of the baseball franchise as well as the Portland Oaks soccer franchise. The Beavers ran into financial problems almost from the beginning of their

new life, with the PCL having to take over management of the franchise at one point.

(It's worth noting that a second PCL franchise, the Memphis Redbirds, also has struggled under the burden of huge debt, and this in spite of the fact that the Redbirds play in the best park in the minor leagues and have generally drawn huge crowds. The track record of highly leveraged minor league clubs is not a good one.)

The details of the Portland franchise's financial quagmire are another story for another time, but after most of the original players took a financial bath, the team now seems to have committed, stable ownership led by Merritt Paulson.

Unfortunately, the warm embrace from the city of Portland has yet to come. Paulson and the city worked together to assemble still another renovation project for PGE Park, with this one costing about \$31 million. But the aim of this project is to create a home for a Major League Soccer franchise, the top level of professional soccer in the United States.

The stadium will seat about 20,000 after the next round of renovations, and while it can still serve as a venue for high school and college football, baseball will get kicked to the curb.

Headed For Tucson

Paulson expected to be able to put together a deal for a new baseball-only park to serve as the Beavers' new home, but so far that hasn't worked out. So as pitchers and catchers were reporting to spring training, Paulson released a statement confirming that he was looking beyond Portland for a home.

"My goal remains to keep the Beavers in Portland or the Portland area," Paulson said in his statement, "and in the past year we've advanced three good, but unsuccessful, stadium financing plans to do just that."

"With no immediate local solution at this time, however, I have been approached by other locales with contingency plans for the Beavers outside the area. This is not our preferred option, but one that we have no choice but to consider."

Newspapers in both Portland and Tucson reported that Tucson was one of the cities the Beavers were looking at, at least as a temporary home. Tucson was home to a PCL franchise from 1969-2008, but the team moved to Reno beginning with the 2009 season. Tucson is also losing its spring training franchises, so its residents might be hungry for baseball.

The city is being considered a temporary solution at this point, but given the struggles of Triple-A baseball in Portland, maybe it's just not meant to be. It might be more realistic to build a smaller, cheaper park and go back to the Northwest League, as that club was much more successful than the PCL club ever was. In fact, the NWL club actually had better attendance than the old PCL club had in its final years, in about half the home dates. So maybe the folks in Portland just prefer a shorter schedule, in warmer weather.

Until that gets settled, however, fans should turn out for Opening Day this year, because it's not clear they'll have another one for awhile.

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Decade in a box

SINGLE-SEASON LEADERS FOR THE 2000-2009 DECADE

BEST SEASON, HITTER

No one can touch Brandon Wood's 2005 season, when he had 101 extra-base hits, the most by a minor leaguer since the old Pacific Coast League's extended schedule. Wood's overall line still looks like a misprint five years later—he batted .321/.381/.667 with a decade-best 370 total bases, 53 doubles, 43 homers and 116 RBIs while playing shortstop. Delmon Young (.315/.354/.527, 26 homers, 32 stolen bases) edged him out for Baseball America's Minor League Player of the Year Award for having big numbers at higher levels at a younger age (Young was 19, Wood 20), but Wood's numbers stand out as the decade's best single performance.



Brandon Wood

HIGHEST BATTING AVERAGE

- .383: Rick Short, 2005, New Orleans
- .380: James Loney, 2006, Las Vegas
- .379: Kevin Kouzmanoff, 2006, Akron/Buffalo

HIGHEST ON-BASE PERCENTAGE

- .481: Pat Magness, 2005, Lynchburg
- .467: Jack Cust, 2006, Portland
- .463: Travis Hafner, 2002, Oklahoma

HIGHEST SLUGGING PERCENTAGE

- .722: Phil Hiatt, 2001, Las Vegas
- .712: Calvin Pickering, 2004, Omaha
- .695: Nelson Cruz, 2008, Oklahoma

MOST RUNS

- 125: Andy Green, 2005, Tucson
- 123: Fernando Perez, 2006, Visalia
- 122: Lew Ford, 2000, Augusta
- 122: Joe Dillon, 2004, Carolina/Albuquerque

MOST HITS

- 196: Joe Thurston, 2002, Las Vegas
- 189: Erick Aybar, 2004, Rancho Cucamonga
- 198: Lyle Overbay, 2001, El Paso

MOST DOUBLES

- 55: Zach Daeges, 2007, Lancaster
- 54: Delwyn Young, 2007, Las Vegas
- 53: Brandon Wood, 2005, Rancho Cucamonga



COMPILED BY BASEBALL AMERICA STAFF

MOST HOME RUNS

- 46: Ryan Howard, 2004, Reading/Scranton
- 44: Phil Hiatt, 2001, Las Vegas
- 43: Brandon Wood, 2005, Rancho Cucamonga

MOST RUNS BATTED IN

- 137: Juan Silvestre, 2000, Lancaster
- 137: Brad Eldred, 2004, Lynchburg/Altoona
- 131: Ryan Howard, 2004, Reading/Scranton

MOST STOLEN BASES

- 111: Chris Morris, 2001, Peoria
- 109: Esix Snead, 2000, Potomac
- 90: Freddy Guzman, 2003, Lake Elsinore/Mobile/Portland

LONGEST HITTING STREAK

- 45: Jamie McOwen, 2009, High Desert
- 43: Brandon Watson, 2007, Columbus
- 38: Mitch Hilligoss, 2007, Charleston (S.C.)



Jamie McOwen

TOTAL BASES

- 370: Brandon Wood, 2005, Rancho Cucamonga
- 349: Dallas McPherson, 2004, Arkansas/Salt Lake
- 348: Joe Dillon, 2004, Carolina/Albuquerque

BEST SEASON, PITCHER

It's hard to argue against Madison Bumgarner's 2008 campaign, even if it did come at low Class A. Then 18, Bumgarner went 15-3, 1.46—the fourth-best ERA of the decade at 1.4611 just behind the 1.456 of Zach Duke in 2004. He added 164 strikeouts in 142 innings while giving up just 21 walks, 111 hits and three home runs. Honorable mention goes to Justin Verlander for his 11-2, 1.29 season over 20 starts at high Class A Lakeland and Double-A Erie, when he struck out 136 and walked 26 in 119 innings.

MOST WINS

- 18: Matt Guerrier, 2001, Birmingham/Charlotte
- 18: Ian Ferguson, 2002, Wilmington/Wichita
- 18: Gustavo Chacin, 2004, New Hampshire/Syracuse
- 18: Jhoulys Chacin, 2008, Asheville/Modesto

MOST LOSSES

- 19: Greg Kloosterman, 2005, West Virginia
- 18: Kyle Lohse, 2000, New Britain
- MANY TIED AT 17



Madison Bumgarner

MOST STRIKEOUTS

- 220: Brandon Claussen, 2001, Tampa/Norwich
- 214: Clint Nageotte, 2002, San Bernardino
- 203: Josh Beckett, 2001, Brevard County/Portland

LOWEST ERA

- 1.29: Justin Verlander, 2005, Lakeland/Erie
- 1.41: Jon Connolly, 2003, West Michigan
- 1.46: Zach Duke, 2004, Lynchburg/Altoona

ATTENDANCE

- 404,817,468: Total attendance for Minor League Baseball affiliated clubs and the Mexican League
- 43,263,740: 2008 total minor league attendance, an all-time record
- 989,454: Monterrey Sultans' 2006 attendance in the Mexican League, the minors' single-season high
- 901,214: Sacramento RiverCats' 2001 attendance, domestic best in the minors



Zach Daeges

The rest of the story ...

BEST PROMOTIONS

1. AWFUL NIGHT, DOUBLE-A ALTOONA, JULY 14, 2003: Since they strive to make everything right at the ballpark on a nightly basis, the Altoona Curve decided to dedicate one night when they would do everything wrong. That came on July 14, 2003, when the Curve debuted Awful Night—which included bad music (William Shatner and Milli Vanilli played throughout the game), promotions (fans received a piece of bubble wrap) and food (Tang and Spam were added to the concessions menu).

2. NOBODY NIGHT, LOW CLASS A CHARLESTON, JULY 8, 2002: Nobody thinks up a promotion quite like Mike Veeck, and this was one of his classics. Fans were locked out of the park until the fifth inning, when the game went in the

books. Official attendance: Zero. Unofficial attendance: 1,800.

3. ARTHUR ANDERSEN/ENRON NIGHT, TRIPLE-A PORTLAND, JULY 18, 2002: Fans were encouraged to bring documents to be destroyed at shredding stations set up around the ballpark in jest of the accounting firm's attempted cover up of the Enron investigation. Anyone named Arthur or Andersen was admitted to the ballpark free of charge.

4. BOB L. HEAD PROMOTION, TRIPLE-A PORTLAND, AUG. 18, 2007: With bobblehead giveaways becoming the rage in the minors, the Beavers sought to find the original. They kicked off a preseason nationwide search for a real Bob L. Head.

The event drew national headlines and ended

up making a bobblehead in the likeness Bob Leroy Head of Maquoketa, Iowa.

A VERY GOOD MOVIE COULD BE MADE ABOUT: Independent baseball is screaming for a good movie treatment. Real-life indy ball has provided enough fodder over the last 17 years to fill 90 minutes and probably to create a franchise with several movies. Our idea—bring several true indy ball tales together around one team, and make it a travel team like the 2000 Black Diamonds of the Atlantic League, whose players stayed at a local campground.

We'd start with the ace pitcher with the hip who can't get insured to play affiliated ball (Isaac Hess), fill in with some goofball trades (like the time when a team traded for the fictional character "Leon" from Budweiser commercials fame), and wrap up with a postseason decided by video game (as nearly happened, albeit in a regular-season game, in the Northern League in 2005).



Mike Veeck

Focus helps Chisenhall leave past behind

BY JOHN MANUEL

Ray Tanner keeps the letter in his daily planner, a constant reminder of a low moment that became a revelation, as he leads South Carolina's baseball program.

It's the letter Lonnie Chisenhall, then regarded as the nation's top freshman and the Gamecocks' No. 3 hitter, wrote him about a month after Chisenhall was dismissed from the baseball team.

Chisenhall and teammate Nick Fuller—also a high-profile freshman as an unsigned third-round draft pick—had made a fateful mistake on March 13, 2007. They stole a flat-screen television, a video-game system, some DVDs and computer equipment, and more than \$3,000 cash from the locker of then-assistant coach Jim Toman.

Six days later, they turned themselves in to campus police. That night, Tanner announced he had dismissed the duo from the team.

"It was a very unusual situation," Tanner says now. "It was very difficult when it came down. It was an unfortunate decision to dismiss both of them, one I didn't want to make. But I felt I had to."

"I did believe in him, though. Even when I was making the decision to dismiss Lonnie, I didn't want to do it. And he showed me something when he sent me a two-page, handwritten letter, where he apologized and really took accountability for what happened. That meant a lot. It still means a lot."

Chisenhall, taking time out for a telephone interview during this first big league spring training, doesn't like to talk about the past, to borrow a baseball phrase of the times. But he is well aware of the draft class he was a part of in 2008—a very strong one—and what might have been had he stayed in college for three seasons and come out in 2009.

"There are a lot of guys that went ahead of me (in 2008) who already are in the big leagues," Chisenhall says of a first round that included Brian Matusz, Buster Posey, Gordon Beckham and former South Carolina teammates Justin Smoak and Reese Havens. "That kind of pushed me down in the draft. If I'd been at South Carolina for three years, who knows what might have happened?"

"It would have been good for me if I'd been in (last year's) draft; there weren't many college hitters. But that's not how it happened."

Yet the way it ended up, Chisenhall isn't sure he'd change a thing.

When Chisenhall was booted off South Carolina's roster, his future was hazy. A Newport, N.C., native, he wound up transferring close to home, to Pitt (N.C.) Community College. Pitt's coach, Tommy Eason, had been a minor league teammate of Chisenhall's agent, Eric Sobocinski, and Eason proved to be a good choice to help get Chisenhall back on track.

Chisenhall had been slated to play in the Cape Cod League in the summer of 2007. Instead, he had to attend summer classes at Pitt to become eligible, just to get back on the field. He also wanted to take enough hours and post a 3.5 GPA so that he would be eligible to transfer back to a Division I school for 2009, in case the draft didn't work out. And in February 2008, he was sentenced to six months of probation after pleading guilty to misdemeanor charges of burglary and larceny in connection with the incident at South Carolina. That meant he had to check in with a probation officer periodically.

"I grew up real fast," Chisenhall says. "I feel like I grew up in about an hour. Coach Eason was a big factor. He helped me, worked with me, with my classes, got me on the field and helped get me focused. I really had to get tunnel vision."

Chisenhall stayed focused and hit .410/.528/.765 at Pitt with just eight strikeouts in 166 at-bats in 2008. While some clubs still had reservations about his makeup, the Indians did not, owing in large part to the relationship assistant general manager John Mirabelli has with Tanner. The Tribe's top scout once had served as Tanner's pitching coach at North Carolina State and was his roommate for a time.

"That was a huge factor in why we drafted Lonnie Chisenhall," Mirabelli says. "We had a history with Lonnie; I had scouted him in high school. Actually, it's kind of ironic because I saw a playoff game where Lonnie faced Alex White in high school, and those are our last two first-round picks. So we knew Lonnie, and our area guy, Bob Mayer, deserves credit for getting to know him and doing his homework."

"But we also knew Ray Tanner very well. I would trust Ray



Lonnie Chisenhall's smooth swing made him a prospect, and his total focus has helped put him on the fast track to Cleveland

with my son. So when he says, 'I believe in him,' and says he's confident that was a one-time mistake, then that's good enough for me."

The Indians took Chisenhall 29th overall, quickly signed him for a \$1.3 million bonus and sent him out as a shortstop, where he played at Pitt. His adjustment to professional baseball proved to be a smooth one, as he hit .290/.355/.438 for short-season Mahoning Valley.

The Indians presented him with more challenges in 2009. First, they moved him from short to his more natural position of third base, where more power is required offensively. And they skipped him a level up to high Class A Kinston, in the pitcher-friendly Carolina League. With just eight teams, the CL is notorious for second-half slumps, as teams get to know each other so well playing 20 times a season.

Kinston is also about an hour from Chisenhall's Newport home, but the assignment didn't faze him in either regard. He batted .276/.346/.492 with 18 home runs in just 99 games, ranking fourth in the league, and finished on an 8-for-25 kick with two homers and three doubles.

"He's more mature than most guys and was able to handle that. I really think he has a heightened sense of urgency and immediacy because of what he went through," Mirabelli says. "He knows that one misstep can screw up your career, and he had that coming in. Professional baseball can be full of pitfalls and derailers, and he has looked out for that."

"In a way, what happened was almost a silver lining. He came in with his eyes wide open. He was forced to mature quicker than most 19-year-olds."

A 20-year-old at the end of last season, Chisenhall hit his way to Double-A Akron and bashed four home runs in 24 games despite hitting just .183. His manager, Mike Sarbaugh, said Chisenhall hit the ball hard despite not having results to show for it, and that was reflected in his playoff numbers. He hit .467 (14-for-30) to help the Aeros, Baseball America's Minor League Team of the Year, to the Eastern League championship.

"My first full year really went as well as I could have expected," Chisenhall says. "Playing in Kinston was great, because my family and my friends got to come to some games, but it was also great when I got a chance to move up. Playing in Akron was fun because we had a good clubhouse and a great team. We clinched with like two weeks left in the season, and the playoffs were a great experience."

Chisenhall earned an invitation to big league camp this spring and has continued work on the transition to third base. He's working on fundamentals such as footwork and how to pick up balls off the bat with Mahoning Valley manager Travis Fryman, who made the transition from shortstop to third in the big leagues, and big league infield and third-base coach Steve Smith, as well as special

Fuller still seeks turnaround

Lonnie Chisenhall's life changed in 2007 after the theft that led to his dismissal from the South Carolina baseball program. The same can be said for his partner in crime.

Nick Fuller, the other player involved in the thefts, was a third-round pick of the Rays coming out of Kell High in suburban Atlanta in 2006. He turned down roughly \$450,000 to play at South Carolina. Until the arrest, Fuller's career seemed to be going exactly as planned. He hadn't allowed a hit or run in his six appearances with the Gamecocks.

But while Chisenhall has rebounded to develop into one of the top third-base prospects in the minors, Fuller has struggled to get career back on track.

After his dismissal from South Carolina, Fuller transferred to Walters State (Tenn.) JC for the 2008 season. The success he had at South Carolina didn't follow him to Tennessee. Fuller always had a violent arm action, which led to concerns about his command and durability. At Walters State, the fastball that once touched 95 mph sat more often between 88-92. Walters State coach Ken Campbell said that he had no problems with Fuller on or off the field, but a shoulder injury limited his success.

"He was a hard worker and a very intelligent kid. He was almost a 4.0 (GPA) student. But he started having control problems," Campbell said. "We had it checked out. He had shoulder problems. We just weren't able to get a whole lot out of him."

Fuller went 5-2, 5.61 with 64 hits allowed, 34 walks and 64 strikeouts in 59 innings for Walters State. The Braves drafted him in the 25th round in 2008, but Fuller's shoulder injury precluded a shot at pro ball at the time. He missed the entire 2009 season recovering from shoulder surgery and now has moved on to Southern Poly State, an NAIA school in his native Marietta, Ga.

Academically, Fuller is now thriving, according to his new coach, Matt Griffen. But athletically he has been unable to regain the stuff that once made him a top prospect. Fuller walked the only three batters he faced in his first outing of the season and has walked at least three batters in each of his first four outings (four innings combined). Overall he was 0-0, 11.25 with 11 walks in four innings.

Attempts to interview Fuller for this story were unsuccessful. It seems unlikely he'll ever receive another pro contract that approaches the money he turned down as a high school senior, based on injury and makeup concerns from scouts and other team officials.

So while Chisenhall makes his climb to major league prominence, his former teammate continues to wait for his big turnaround.

—J.J. COOPER

assistant Robbie Thompson. Chisenhall said he has tried to pick a point of contact out in front of home plate to pick up the ball, and works to make sure his eyes are level and he's focused on the plate. The Indians expect him to be an average or better defender at third with experience.

"He has all the tools for third—the hands, the feet, agility, arm strength," Mirabelli says. "But this guy isn't just natural talent. He works at it. He takes hundreds of groundballs a day, he takes a lot of cuts, he really works at it. He's a good teammate and has shown a pro work ethic from the day he came to us."

"He's a gifted hitter. If you can't see that swing, I mean, everybody can see that swing. But he works at his game."

Chisenhall will work at it back at Akron to start 2010, but he might end it in Cleveland, where the Indians are in the midst of another rebuilding project. While veteran Jhonny Peralta, himself a former shortstop, and Andy Marte are ahead of him for now, Chisenhall is on pace to be the Indians' regular third baseman by 2011.

He's happy with where his career is. And with what he's gone through, Chisenhall isn't looking ahead. He's had everything laid out for him before and squandered it. He doesn't intend to mess it up again.

"Everybody wants to do it over again if they could," he says, "but it happened. I got out a year early. How I developed as a hitter and as a person, would I be in the same position if it hadn't happened this way? I'm not sure if things had happened differently if I would be where I am now."

ORGANIZATION TALENT RANKINGS

Productive Rays system remains stocked with top talent and depth

Baseball America's minor league talent rankings line up organizations based on their current prospect-eligible players heading into the 2010 season. The rankings take into account both high-ceiling prospects as well as overall depth of talent, with the best organizations having both. Rankings are by the Baseball America staff, while the text was written by Jim Callis.

01 Tampa Bay Rays

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 4.

IMPACT TALENT: Even after graduating Evan Longoria and David Price quickly to the majors, the Rays still have plenty of quality talent on the way to the majors, led by OF Desmond Jennings, RHPs Jeremy Hellickson and Wade Davis, and LHP Matt Moore. Tampa Bay led all clubs with seven players (Jennings, Hellickson, Davis, Moore, SS Reid Brignac, SS Tim Beckham and RHP Alex Colome) on our Top 100 Prospects list.

DEPTH: Tampa Bay is as deep as it is talented, especially in terms of pitching, with a second wave of arms that includes Colome and RHP Nick Barnese, and LHPs Jake McGee, Alex Torres and Kyle Lobstein. It's also telling that Beckham, the No. 1 pick in the 2008 draft, ranks just sixth on our Rays Top 10 list.

2010 ROOKIES: Davis won the fifth starter's job with six strong outings last September. Jennings soon will push B.J. Upton from center to right field, while Hellickson and Brignac could make an impact if given the opportunity.

02 Texas Rangers

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 1.

IMPACT TALENT: RHP Neftali Feliz already has made his presence felt in Texas with 31 dominant innings last summer. 1B Justin Smoak and LHP Martin Perez could have made a case for outranking Feliz as the Rangers' No. 1 prospect, and the club signed a pair of potential stars in RHP Tanner Scheppers and SS Jurickson Profar last summer.

DEPTH: Texas' system has thinned out a little in the last year, following the promotions of Elvis Andrus, Julio Borbon, Derek Holland and Tommy Hunter in 2009. The Rangers continue to replenish their talent through the draft—though they whiffed on signing 2009 first-rounder Matt Purke—and the international market.

2010 ROOKIES: The only question with Feliz is whether Texas should deploy him as a starter or reliever. Unless Chris Davis catches fire again, Smoak could take his job before the all-star break.

03 Cleveland Indians

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 7.

IMPACT TALENT: C Carlos Santana and 3B Lonnie Chisenhall should form the heart of Cleveland's future batting order. LHP Nick Hagadone and RHP Jason Knapp, acquired in 2009 trades for Victor Martinez and Cliff Lee, have electric arms.

DEPTH: The Indians have built a strong system, more via trades (Santana, Hagadone, Knapp, OF Michael Brantley, RHP Carlos Carrasco) and the Latin American market (RHP Hector Rondon, LHP Kelvin de la Cruz) than the draft.

2010 ROOKIES: Lou Marson will keep the catching job warm while Santana recovers from hand surgery, and the rebuilding Indians will also make regulars of Brantley and Carrasco. Rondon could get an opportunity as well.

04 San Francisco Giants

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 5.

IMPACT TALENT: The only team that can match San Francisco's 1-2 punch of C Buster Posey and LHP Madison Bumgarner is Texas with Feliz and Smoak. RHP Zack Wheeler, the No. 6 overall pick in the 2009 draft, is more advanced than Bumgarner was at the same stage.

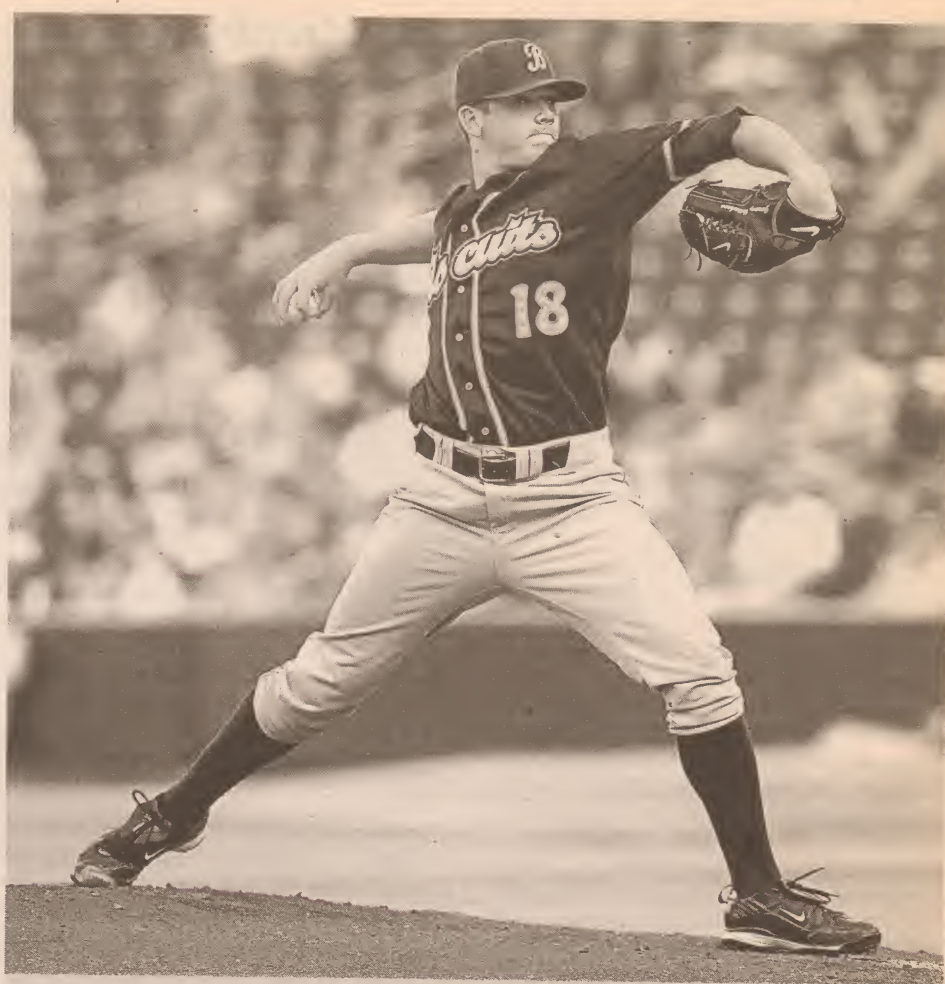
DEPTH: Our Giants Top 10 list drops off markedly after the big three, but overall San Francisco's Top 30—buy the Prospect Handbook to check it out—is one of the deepest in the game.

2010 ROOKIES: Bumgarner may be ready to step into the rotation at age 20. Posey needs to polish his receiving before he takes over for Bengie Molina behind the plate.

05 Boston Red Sox

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 13.

IMPACT TALENT: OF Ryan Westmoreland has some of the best all-around tools in the game, though his baseball future is on hold after brain surgery this spring. SEE PAGE 3. RHP



Tampa Bay's system is loaded with pitching talent, led by hard-throwing righthander Jeremy Hellickson

Casey Kelly, now that he has focused on pitching, could have three plus pitches and exudes polish. SS Jose Iglesias is dazzling with the glove and should end Boston's problems at his position.

DEPTH: The Red Sox don't have a lot of big league-ready talent, but they have more high-ceiling position prospects and arms than any other organization. That group includes the impact prospects mentioned above, as well as OF Reymond Fuentes, SS/2B Derrik Gibson, LHP Drake Britton and RHP Madison Younginer.

2010 ROOKIES: Boston doesn't have openings on its roster for OF Josh Reddick or RHPs Junichi Tazawa and Michael Bowden, so lefty specialist Dustin Richardson could be its top rookie this season.

06 Minnesota Twins

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 22.

IMPACT TALENT: OF Aaron Hicks is a five-tool talent with more polish than expected from a two-way product who's just a year and a half removed from high school. C Wilson Ramos would get more hype if he weren't stuck behind Joe Mauer, and RHP Kyle Gibson could have been a top 10 pick last June if he hadn't come down with a forearm injury right before the draft. SS/3B Miguel Sano was the top player on the international market last summer.

DEPTH: The Twins system sticks out most for a crop of athletic outfielders headlined by Hicks, Ben Revere, Angel Morales and Max Kepler.

2010 ROOKIES: Minnesota is favored to win the American League Central, and its only rookie with a shot at much playing time is 3B Danny Valencia.

07 Florida Marlins

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 2.

IMPACT TALENT: OF Mike Stanton has more raw power than any prospect in the game, and he might have the most athleticism as well. 1B Logan Morrison has the tools to be a classic No. 3 hitter, and LHP Chad James has the stuff to be a frontline starter.

DEPTH: Florida's system doesn't have a particular area of strength, nor does it have a glaring weakness. There's balance all over the diamond.

2010 ROOKIES: The Marlins should have a rookie starting at a corner infield spot this season, probably either Morrison or Gaby Sanchez at first base, with Rule 5 pick Jorge Jimenez a longshot at third base. Stanton and OF Scott Cousins could factor into the outfield mix.

08 Baltimore Orioles

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 9.

IMPACT TALENT: LHPs Brian Matusz and Zach Britton should join Chris Tillman at the front of Baltimore's rotation for years to come. 3B Josh Bell has the power and arm strength to be a star on the hot corner, and trading for him gave the Orioles a standout bat that they otherwise didn't have.

DEPTH: Most of the Orioles' best prospects are pitchers, with RHPs Jake Arrieta, Matt Hobgood and Brandon Erbe backing up the lefties.

2010 ROOKIES: Matusz is a prime Rookie of the Year candidate after winning five of his eight big league starts last summer. RHP Kam Mickolio should contribute in the bullpen.

ORGANIZATION TALENT RANKINGS



Freddie Freeman should join Jason Heyward to give the Braves another potent young bat

Atlanta Braves

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 6.

IMPACT TALENT: OF Jason Heyward is the game's best prospect, and 1B Freddie Freeman has raced through the minors alongside him. RHPs Julio Teheran and Arodys Vizcaino (who came over as part of the Javier Vazquez trade with the Yankees) have huge ceilings but a long way to go.

DEPTH: The Braves have gotten more conservative in the draft, so many of their best prospects have come from the international market: Teheran, SS/3B Edward Salcedo, C Christian Bethancourt, RHP Randall Delgado.

2010 ROOKIES: The talk of Atlanta's major league spring training camp, Heyward quickly is locking up the right-field job. Fireballing RHP Craig Kimbrel could make his big league debut soon.

Colorado Rockies

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 20.

IMPACT TALENT: Colorado stole LHPs Tyler Matzek (No. 11 pick in 2009) and Christian Friedrich (No. 25 in 2008) much lower in the draft than they should have gone.

DEPTH: The Rockies bolstered their system with baseball's best draft in 2009, starting with Matzek, OF Tim Wheeler, LHP Rex Brothers and 3B Nolan Arenado with their first four picks.

2010 ROOKIES: 2B/OF Eric Young Jr.'s speed will earn him some playing time, if not a regular role. RHPs Jhoulys Chacin and Esmil Rogers could contribute if needed after getting their feet wet in Colorado last year.

Oakland Athletics

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 3.

IMPACT TALENT: The A's need offense, and 1B/OF Chris Carter, OF Michael Taylor and SS Grant Green have the ability to rectify that situation.

DEPTH: Oakland is hitter-heavy after promoting an entire rotation (Brett Anderson, Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez, Vin Mazzaro, Josh Outman) and a closer (AL rookie of the year Andrew Bailey) to the majors last year.

2010 ROOKIES: Carter and Taylor may not win everyday jobs out of spring training, but they should by the all-star break.

Seattle Mariners

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 24.

IMPACT TALENT: Scouts say that OF/1B/2B Dustin Ackley, the No. 2 overall pick in last year's draft, is the best pure hitter in the minors and the best to come out of college baseball in at least two decades. For a guy with average or better tools across the board, OF Michael Saunders doesn't seem to generate a lot of hype.

DEPTH: Ackley and Saunders were draft picks, but the Mariners have had more recent success using the international market, the source of many of their best prospects, including Italian 3B Alex Liddi, Dominican SS/2B Carlos Triunfel and Dominican RHP Michael Pineda.

2010 ROOKIES: C Adam Moore is competing for a starting job in spring training, while Saunders will have to wait a bit longer for an opportunity.

Milwaukee Brewers

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 10.

IMPACT TALENT: Slick-fielding SS Alcides Escobar forced J.J. Hardy out of town by taking his job last August. 2B Brett Lawrie might be the second coming of Jeff Kent, provided he can stay at second base.

DEPTH: The Brewers have done a much better job of developing hitters than pitchers in recent years, and their top minor leaguers are still position prospects Escobar, Lawrie and 3B Mat Gamel. Behind them, RHP Eric Arnett leads a promising group of arms.

2010 ROOKIES: Escobar is a lock to start at shortstop after hitting .304 in Milwaukee last season. Gamel could push overachieving Casey McGehee for playing time by midseason, when C Jonathan Lucroy could begin to pressure free-agent signee Gregg Zaun.

Chicago Cubs

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 27.

IMPACT TALENT: The Cubs have three up-the-middle standouts in SS Starlin Castro, OF Brett Jackson and SS Hak-Ju Lee. 3B Josh Vitters and RHP Andrew Cashner are notable for the power in their bat and arm, respectively.

DEPTH: Chicago's system is deeper than it has been in the years, though many of its best prospects are still a year or two away from the majors. The Cubs are best-stocked with middle infielders: Castro, Lee, Logan Watkins, Ryan Flaherty, D.J. Lemahieu and Darwin Barney.

2010 ROOKIES: Though he's barely 20 and has played only 31 games above Class A, there's talk Castro could open the season as Chicago's shortstop. Several rookies—most notably RHPs Andrew Cashner, Blake Parker and Esmilin Caridad, and LHP John Gaub—could help revamp the bullpen.

Pittsburgh Pirates

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 18.

IMPACT TALENT: 3B Pedro Alvarez slugged

27 homers in his pro debut and is the best power hitter to come through the system since Barry Bonds.

DEPTH: The Pirates have used the draft and trades to give the system its best depth in recent memory, but they still need to develop more cornerstone players. Only six members of our Pirates Top 30 list were in the organization before Neal Huntington became general manager in September 2007.

2010 ROOKIES: Alvarez should power his way into Pittsburgh's lineup by the all-star break. RHP Brad Lincoln and OF Jose Tabata also could make their presence felt by then.

Kansas City Royals

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 11.

IMPACT TALENT: LHP Mike Montgomery and RHP Aaron Crow headline a Royals system dominated by pitchers. This season will be important in determining whether 3B Mike Moustakas and 1B Eric Hosmer can regain some of the luster they lost in 2009.

DEPTH: Kansas City has built up its system by aggressively spending in the draft. After Montgomery, its next five best prospects either signed for big league deals (Crow) or over-slot bonuses (Moustakas, Hosmer, C Wil Myers, RHP Tim Melville).

2010 ROOKIES: The Royals don't have much big league-ready talent, leaving RHP Carlos Rosa, a middle reliever, as the only rookie likely to contribute.

Cincinnati Reds

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 14.

IMPACT TALENT: LHP Aroldis Chapman has generated lots of buzz, first by hitting 100 mph at the 2009 World Baseball Classic, then by signing for \$30.25 million, and now by showing his dominant stuff in major league spring training. He immediately jumped to the forefront among Cincinnati prospects, ahead of OF/2B/3B Todd Frazier, 1B Yonder Alonso and RHP Mike Leake.

DEPTH: The Reds have a solid if unspectacular system, with a nice balance of prospects between the upper and lower levels of the minors as well as at positions all over the diamond.

2010 ROOKIES: LHPs Matt Maloney and Travis Wood will get first shot at an opening in the Cincinnati rotation, with Chapman looming as soon as he's ready. Underdog OF Chris Heisey has little left to prove in the minors.

Philadelphia Phillies

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 12.

IMPACT TALENT: Philadelphia emptied its farm system to trade for Cliff Lee and Roy Halladay, but refused to part with five-tool OF Domonic Brown.

DEPTH: The Phillies depleted their store of polished prospects, but they still have a number of raw athletes (such as OF Anthony Gose) and power arms (led by RHPs Phillippe Aumont and Trevor May) with huge upsides.

2010 ROOKIES: Coming off consecutive National League pennants, Philadelphia has few job openings. LHP Anthony Bastardo

and RHP Scott Mathieson may find work in the bullpen.

Toronto Blue Jays

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 19.

IMPACT TALENT: All of Toronto's blue-chip prospects—RHP Kyle Drabek, 3B/1B Brett Wallace, C Travis d'Arnaud, RHP Zach Stewart—were acquired in trades.

DEPTH: The Blue Jays didn't sign a single member of our Top 100 Prospects list, and their system placed 28th in our Prospect Handbook rankings before new GM Alex Anthopoulos turned Roy Halladay into Drabek, Wallace and d'Arnaud.

2010 ROOKIES: Wallace's defense is still shaky at the hot corner, but his bat is ready to help the Jays. RHP Josh Roenicke, another trade acquisition, is as talented as any member of Toronto's bullpen.

San Diego Padres

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 29.

IMPACT TALENT: OF Donovan Tate was the best athlete available in the 2009 draft, though there are questions about his bat. RHP Simon Castro and OF Jaff Decker had breakout seasons in low Class A last year.

DEPTH: San Diego focused on drafting college players for years, but high school (Tate, Decker) and international (Castro) prospects stick out the most in its system.

2010 ROOKIES: After a huge rookie crop that included Kyle Blanks, Everth Cabrera, Mat Latos and Will Venable a year ago, the Padres won't have many new faces this season. LHP Aaron Poreda could crack the rotation or bullpen after coming over from the White Sox in the Jake Peavy trade.

Los Angeles Dodgers

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 23.

IMPACT TALENT: SS Dee Gordon has electric speed and doesn't look like someone who has played baseball for only four years. After mild health problems in 2008, RHP Chris Withrow worked at 92-96 mph and hit 99 last summer.

DEPTH: Gordon is emblematic of many of Los Angeles' best prospects, in that he has a huge ceiling but isn't particularly close to reaching it. The Dodgers system isn't as stacked as it was when it ranked among the game's best in the mid-2000s, but solid drafts are beginning to replenish it.

2010 ROOKIES: RHP Josh Lindblom and LHP Scott Elbert could fill the hole in the back of the Dodgers rotation or play a vital role in the bullpen.

New York Yankees

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 15.

IMPACT TALENT: C Jesus Montero rivals Jason Heyward as the best all-around hitter in the minor. The Yankees traded two Top 100 Prospects in the offseason: OF Austin Jackson to get Curtis Granderson from the Tigers, and

ORGANIZATION TALENT RANKINGS

RHP Arodys Vizcaino to pry Javier Vazquez from the Braves.

DEPTH: Even if the defensively challenged Montero can't stick behind the plate, New York is still loaded at catcher with Andrew Romine, Gary Sanchez and J.R. Murphy.

2010 ROOKIES: Unless Montero bashes his way into the lineup at midseason, the defending World Series champions won't have any rookies playing key roles.

23 Chicago White Sox

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 16.

IMPACT TALENT: OF Jared Mitchell, who won national championships in football and baseball at Louisiana State, is a Carl Crawford in the making but could miss the season after injuring his left ankle in spring training. C Tyler Flowers has improved his defense and has more power than most backstops.

DEPTH: GM Kenny Williams won't hesitate to deal prospects for veterans, and last year he traded four former first-round picks and gave up four players for Jake Peavy. That approach can't help but thin out the system, but it works for the White Sox.

2010 ROOKIES: An unheralded fifth-round-er in 2008, RHP Dan Hudson reached the majors at the end of his first full season and is first in line should a rotation spot open up. Flowers could take over for A.J. Pierzynski before the year is out.

24 Washington Nationals

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 21.

IMPACT TALENT: RHPs Stephen Strasburg and Drew Storen, who were top 10 overall picks in 2009, are the club's No. 1 starter and closer of the future. C Derek Norris is a well-rounded hitter with all-star potential if he can stay behind the plate.

DEPTH: Washington's system is more top-heavy than most, as the star power of Strasburg, Norris and Storen dwarfs the overall collection of talent.

2010 ROOKIES: The future could arrive by midseason for the Nationals when Strasburg and Storen come up. SS Ian Desmond is pushing for Cristian Guzman's job after an impressive September callup.

25 New York Mets

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 17.

IMPACT TALENT: Most of the Mets' top prospects are products of the international market—RHP Jennry Mejia, SS Wilmer Flores, OF Fernando Martinez—where the club has spent more of its resources. 1B Ike Davis is the most promising of New York's recent draft picks.

DEPTH: The upper levels of the system couldn't provide enough reinforcements in 2009, but there's promise at the lower levels. A lot of the Mets' best prospects still require polish, but they do have talent.

2010 ROOKIES: Davis may already be New York's best option at first base, though he may get some Triple-A time before he gets the call. LHP Jon Niese and C Josh Thole could be ready for expanded roles after getting cameos last year.

No organization has matched Arizona for recent production

RANKINGS AND WRITEUPS BY JIM CALLIS

As an accompaniment to our annual organization talent rankings—which rate teams based on the current minor league talent on hand—we've rated each system based on the talent that has passed through it in the last three years, considering both prospects who graduated to the big leagues and those used in trades. A team gets credit only for players who spent time in its system, so some foreign imports (Daisuke Matsuzaka), Rule 5 picks (Joakim Soria) and trade acquisitions who went straight to the majors (Jair Jurrjens) weren't considered. Players such as Chris Tillman, who were dealt by one organization and reached the big leagues with another, were credited to both.

1. DIAMONDBACKS: Arizona ranks significantly ahead of the rest of the pack after integrating Miguel Montero, Mark Reynolds, Justin Upton and Chris Young into its lineup and using Brett Anderson, Carlos Gonzalez and Max Scherzer in trades. The Diamondbacks produced quantity to match their quality, with several complementary players such as Emilio Bonifacio, Ross Ohlendorf and Gerardo Parra.

2. RED SOX: Boston has developed an MVP (Dustin Pedroia), a major league stolen-base champ (Jacoby Ellsbury), pitchers with ace (Clayton Kershaw) and closer (Daniel Bard) potential, and plenty of trade fodder (most notably, Nick Hagadone and David Murphy).

3. BRAVES: The good news is that Atlanta has come up with its No. 1 starter and shortstop for the long term in Tommy Hanson and Yunel Escobar. The bad news is that the Braves gave up Elvis Andrus, Neftali Feliz and Matt Harrison in the Mark Teixeira trade.

4. RANGERS: Texas started to shore up the top of its lineup with Julio Borbon and Andrus and its rotation with Derek Holland and Tommy Hunter last year. The pitching would be in even better shape if the Rangers hadn't traded John Danks and Edinson Volquez.

5. ATHLETICS: The wheeling and dealing A's got more out of the trade market than any organization over the last three years, starting with Brett Anderson and Carlos Gonzalez in the Dan Haren deal, and developed homegrown players like Andrew Bailey and Kurt Suzuki.

6. REDS: Few clubs ever bring up as many impact prospects in one year as Cincinnati did in 2008, when it promoted Homer Bailey, Jay Bruce, Johnny Cueto and Joey Votto.

7. DODGERS: The system has contributed mightily to consecutive division titles, with Clayton Kershaw and James Loney playing key roles in Los Angeles and Carlos Santana and Josh Bell bringing back Casey Blake and George Sherrill in trades.

8. ROCKIES: Troy Tulowitzki and Ubaldo Jimenez helped Colorado reach the World Series as rookies in 2007 and continue to get better. Dexter Fowler and Chris Iannetta join Tulowitzki to give the Rockies an enviable up-the-middle core.

9. PHILLIES: Philadelphia has aggressively traded prospects Michael Bourn, Adrian Cardenas, Kyle Drabek, Jason Knapp and Michael Taylor to land Brad Lidge, Joe Blanton, Cliff Lee and Roy Halladay. Carlos Ruiz and J.A. Happ have carved out complementary roles on the Phillies.

10. YANKEES: Joba Chamberlain and Phil Hughes contributed to the 2009 World Series championship and are just beginning to deliver on their potential. New York loaded up for a title defense by using prospects Austin Jackson and Arodys Vizcaino to get Curtis Granderson and Javier Vazquez in offseason trades.

11. RAYS: Evan Longoria quickly has become one of the game's elite players, while Jeff Niemann and David Price have deepened an already strong pitching staff.

12. BREWERS: Ryan Braun and Yovanni Gallardo are the cornerstones around whom Milwaukee is building. Matt LaPorta was the key to the 2008 trade for C.C. Sabathia, which led to the Brewers' first play-off berth in 26 seasons.

13. GIANTS: San Francisco introduced a two-time Cy Young Award winner (Tim Lincecum), an all-star closer (Brian Wilson) and the author of a no-hitter (Jonathan Sanchez) in 2007, but hasn't been as successful with position players.

14. TWINS: Likewise, Minnesota has been successful at producing pitching with Nick Blackburn, Matt Garza, Jose Mijares and Kevin Slowey, and came up with a quality center fielder in Denard Span.

15. TIGERS: Detroit has no regrets about going way over MLB's slot recommendations to sign Cameron Maybin, Andrew Miller (that combo turned into Miguel Cabrera via trade) and Rick Porcello. Jair Jurrjens was a nice find in Curacao, but the Tigers gave



Justin Upton

him away for Edgar Renteria.

16. MARINERS: Seattle's two best recent player-development successes are Adam Jones and Chris Tillman—both part of the Erik Bedard trade with Baltimore. In the last year, the Mariners have traded former first-rounders Jeff Clement, Brandon Morrow and Phillippe Aumont to land Jack Wilson, Brandon League and Cliff Lee.

17. BLUE JAYS: Rebuilding Toronto does have hope for the future, as Adam Lind blossomed in 2009 and Brett Cecil, Ricky Romero, Mark Rzepczynski and Travis Snider showed flashes of promise.

18. ORIOLES: After bringing little talent of note to the majors in 2007-08, Baltimore unveiled Nolan Reimold, Chris Tillman and Matt Wieters last year, and unheralded rookie Brad Bergesen posted a 3.43 ERA in 19 starts.

19. WHITE SOX: Gordon Beckham is far and away the best player Chicago has developed recently. The White Sox dealt away the only guy who might challenge him (Chris Carter)—along with many other prospects.

20. CARDINALS: St. Louis graduated star-in-the-making Colby Rasmus to the majors last year and traded sweet-swinging Brett Wallace to get Matt Holliday. Other than that, the Cardinals have generated mostly role players.

21. MARLINS: Chris Coghlan won the 2009 National League rookie of the year award, but Florida is still waiting for Cameron Maybin, Chris Volstad and Sean West to make good on their potential.

22. PADRES: Decay in San Diego's farm system led to a front-office makeover after the 2009 season, which saw the Padres bring promising Kyle Blanks and Mat Latos to the majors.

23. INDIANS: Cleveland has produced its share of solid players, but the only difference-makers are Asdrubal Cabrera and maybe Matt LaPorta—both of whom arrived via trades. The best truly homegrown player to join the Indians in the last three years is Jensen Lewis.

24. ROYALS: Billy Butler is taking steps toward becoming a star, but Alex Gordon and Luke Hochevar were supposed to be much better than they've shown so far.

25. ANGELS: Los Angeles has as much homegrown flavor as any contender, but most of those players arrived in the big leagues long ago. Erick Aybar is the only recent addition, though Brandon Wood should finally get a chance to play regularly in 2010.

26. PIRATES: Pittsburgh would rank last if Andrew McCutchen, and to a lesser extent, Rajai Davis hadn't broken out last year.

27. CUBS: Geovany Soto regressed terribly in his encore to his rookie-of-the-year season, but he's still the best player Chicago has produced in the last three years. The surprising Randy Wells would rank second.

28. NATIONALS: Washington hopes it has found most of its future rotation in Colin Balester, Ross Detwiler, John Lannan and Jordan Zimmermann—but Balester, Detwiler and Zimmermann have gone 8-22, 5-40 in the big leagues so far.

29. ASTROS: Hunter Pence is far and away the highlight for Houston, with Bud Norris well back in his rearview mirror.

30. METS: New York hasn't developed a single solid big leaguer in the last three years. Mike Pelfrey, Daniel Murphy and Bobby Parnell come the closest.

ORGANIZATION TALENT RANKINGS



Austin Jackson should win a job in the Detroit outfield after coming over from the Yankees

26 **Los Angeles Angels**

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 25.

IMPACT TALENT: C Hank Conger has an exciting bat for a catcher, though he still has to prove he can stay healthy and remain behind the plate. OF Mike Trout had one of

the best tools packages among players in the 2009 draft.

DEPTH: Years of giving away draft picks as free-agent compensation crippled Angels drafts and took a toll on the system. Most of the organization's highest-ceiling players, such as Trout and RHPs Garrett Richards and Fabio Martinez, haven't gotten past Rookie ball.

2010 ROOKIES: Los Angeles has few openings for youngsters. RHP Trevor Bell could serve in middle relief and OFs Terry Evans and Chris Pettit could pull reserve duty.

27 **Detroit Tigers**

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 28.

IMPACT TALENT: The Tigers love their power pitchers, and they have two of the minors' best in RHP Jacob Turner and LHP Casey Crosby.

DEPTH: Several of Detroit's top prospects entered the system in the past year, either through the draft (Turner, LHP Andy Oliver, SS Daniel Fields) or trades (OF Austin Jackson, LHP Daniel Schlereth), but overall the talent is still thin.

2010 ROOKIES: Jackson and 2B Scott Sizemore are all but assured everyday jobs to start the season. C Alex Avila's bat should earn him at least semi-regular at-bats, and Schlereth could help in the late innings.

28 **Arizona Diamondbacks**

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 26.

IMPACT TALENT: RHP Jarrod Parker is easily Arizona's best and most big league-ready prospect, but after going down late last season he'll miss all of 2010 while recovering from Tommy John surgery.

DEPTH: The Diamondbacks ranked No. 1 on this list four years ago and third the year after that, but big league graduations and so-so drafts have eroded their minor league talent. Only two of our Arizona Top 10 Prospects were in the system at the beginning of 2009, and the club needs its 2009 draft (seven picks in the first two rounds, starting with 3B Bobby Borchering and OF A.J. Pollock) to be a success.

2010 ROOKIES: RHPs Bryan Augenstein and Kevin Mulvey are in the running for the No. 5 spot in the rotation.

29 **St. Louis Cardinals**

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 8.

IMPACT TALENT: RHP Shelby Miller stands out as one of the few high-ceiling players in the system, ranking as St. Louis' top prospect despite being 19 and owning just three innings of pro experience.

DEPTH: We overrated the Cardinals system at No. 8 a year ago, but they didn't help matters by promoting Colby Rasmus and trading many of their best prospects, most notably Brett Wallace.

2010 ROOKIES: LHP Jaime Garcia could crack the rotation after a successful comeback from Tommy John surgery. 3B David Freese was a frontrunner for a starting job until St. Louis signed Felipe Lopez in late February. OF/1B/3B Allen Craig could be a productive bat off the bench.

30 **Houston Astros**

LAST YEAR'S RANK: 30.

IMPACT TALENT: The Astros' two best prospects are their last two first-round picks, C Jason Castro and SS Jiovanni Mier, and they're head and shoulders above the rest of the talent in the system.

DEPTH: Years of poor drafts, including a disaster that featured no signees before the fifth round in 2007, have crippled the system and leave it woefully thin.

2010 ROOKIES: SS Tommy Manzella is ticketed for a starting job, and Houston hopes he can be the second coming of Adam Everett. RHP Sammy Gervacio posted a 2.14 ERA in 21 big league innings at the end of last season. The Astros are weak at catcher, so Castro could be starting by midseason, if not sooner.

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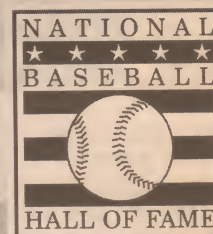
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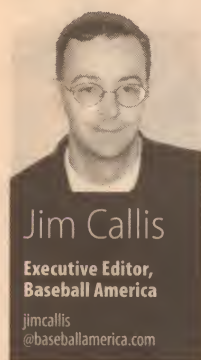
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Few can keep prospect tap running



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CHICAGO

It's easier to sneak a fastball past Albert Pujols than it is to build a consistently productive farm system.

The Braves ranked in the top 10 of our annual farm system rankings every year from 1992-2006, but they're the exception to the rule. The Rays hold the longest active streak of top-

10 ratings with four, which is more indicative of the fact that the most successful organizations usually follow periods of production by needing time to reload.

This issue, we evaluate farm systems based on their current strength, as well as how prolific they've been in the last three years. Just two clubs rank in the top five on both counts: the Rangers and Red Sox.

During his second season as Texas general manager, with his big league club and farm system in disrepair, Jon Daniels sold owner Tom Hicks on a complete rebuilding project. Rather than throwing away more money on free agents, which had been Hicks' preference, the Rangers started hoarding prospects via trades (Elvis Andrus, Neftali Feliz, David Murphy), the draft (Derek Holland, Pedro Borbon, Justin Smoak, Tanner Scheppers) and the international market (Martin Perez).

No club has succeeded as well on all three

fronts. Now Texas has built a contender with the help of Andrus, Borbon, Holland and Murphy, with Feliz, Smoak and possibly Scheppers destined to join them in 2010.

Despite a successful 2005 draft headlined by Jacoby Ellsbury and Clay Buchholz, the Red Sox regretted identifying Smoak, Pedro Alvarez and three other future first-round picks but not spending what it would take to sign them. Price hasn't been an object ever since.

The Red Sox have assembled a strong farm system around over-slot draft signings such as Ryan Westmoreland, Casey Kelly and big-money international players like Jose Iglesias and Junichi Tazawa.

Indians, Marlins On Upswing

The Indians and Marlins have two of the smaller revenue streams in MLB, so they have to build from within. Yet they have done little to help themselves in the last three years.

The only significant player the Indians have introduced is trade acquisition Asdrubal Cabrera. The Marlins unveiled 2009 National League rookie of the year Chris Coghlan, but first-round or sandwich picks Cameron Maybin, Chris Volstad and Sean West have yet to live up to their hype.

Yet there's reason for hope in both Cleveland and Florida.

After ranking No. 1 entering 2003, the Indians' farm system steadily slipped due to a lack of impact draft or international signings. But Cleveland has replenished its store of

young talent through a series of trades in 2008-09, adding Carlos Santana, Matt LaPorta, Nick Hagadone, Jason Knapp and Michael Brantley. The Indians' last two first-round picks, Lonnie Chisenhall and Alex White, could be their best since C.C. Sabathia 12 years ago.

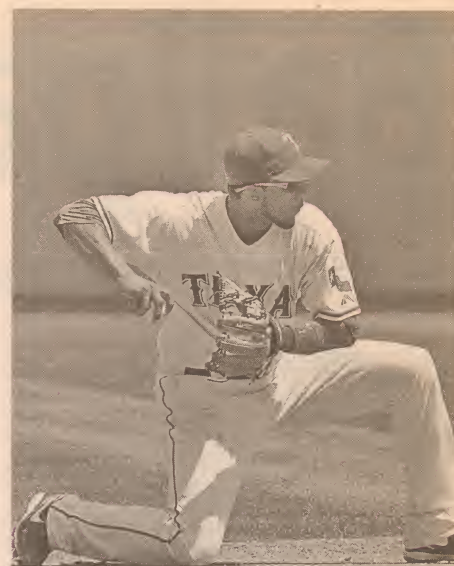
The Marlins have rebuilt almost solely through the draft. Mike Stanton was a second-round find in 2007, and Logan Morrison was an even bigger steal as a 22nd-round draft-and-follow from the 2005 draft. Florida has done fine work in the first round as well, grabbing Chad James last June and Matt Dominguez two years earlier.

Arizona, Astros Have Work To Do

Arizona was better than any organization when it came to generating talent from 2007-09, graduating bonus babies (Justin Upton, Max Scherzer) and bargains (Mark Reynolds, Miguel Montero) to the majors. They had enough quality left over (Brett Anderson, Carlos Gonzalez) to trade for Dan Haren, and plenty of role players such as Ross Ohlendorf and Gerardo Parra.

But Arizona plummeted from the postseason in 2007 to 70 victories last year, and the farm system doesn't have any reinforcements ready. Top prospect Jarrod Parker will miss the season following Tommy John surgery. The Diamondbacks hope they started an influx of talent with a 2009 draft that featured seven picks in two rounds.

Once the industry leaders in mining Venezuela, Houston no longer commands



Young shortstop Elvis Andrus is Exhibit A in the Rangers' renewed focus on player development

much of an international presence. Several weak drafts also have undone the Astros, who gave up premium picks for free agents, failed to sign others and botched more.

Hunter Pence is Houston's only recent homegrown player of note. While the Astros' last two first-rounders, Jason Castro and Jiovanni Mier, look like they'll reverse the club's draft misfortune, the system still is thin and unable to offer much help to an aging big league roster.

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Ballpark Figures

In hopes of big league riches, hundreds of players endure low pay in the minors

BY GARRETT BROSHUIS

Somehow six players had crammed into the small two-bedroom apartment. Two slept in each bedroom, one slept in the living room, and another slept in a tiny den. All slept on air mattresses.

The apartment was in Norwich, Conn., then the home of the Giants' Double-A affiliate. An X-box noisily projected itself on a TV still displaying Walmart stickers; it would go back to the store just before the 90-day return policy expired. Empty McDonald's bags littered the floor, while an old Kara Monaco poster provided the only relief from the sterile whiteness of vacant walls.

To an outsider the setting might seem peculiar, but many minor leaguers live in such circumstances due to the strain of low salaries. If players choose not to cram together in an apartment, they often bunk with host families, as Barbara Rothstein can attest.

Rothstein, whose family served as a host for the Norwich club when it was a Yankees affiliate, lives with her husband in a ranch home on the outskirts of town. Their basement is littered with futons in various positions, monuments from their hosting days.

"We had 12 players, two wives and a baby staying with us all at once," Rothstein says. "We didn't charge them a dime. One month we had a \$5,800 food bill and we tried collecting \$20 from each, but some of them couldn't even afford that."

Rothstein is shocked there is less discussion about minor league salaries. Media attention focuses on major league salaries, which have risen exponentially in the last 35 years, but minor league salaries have barely budged.

"My first year in pro ball was 1974. I made \$500 a month," said former Red Sox catcher Bob Stanley, who now works as a private pitching coach. "When I got to Double-A, I made \$1,000."

Today, many players receive only slightly more. In 2004, I made \$850 a month. Fresh out of college, I thought I was rich. Then I realized that I had bills to pay. Luckily I had received a modest signing bonus that helped at first, but most players receive no such bonuses. Many are forced to ask their parents for help.

"My parents pay my phone bill, my car payment, and help us out with rent in the offseason," one Giants farmhand said recently. "I'm 25, married and living off of them. I wouldn't be able to play if they didn't help me."

With his wife on the team's insurance plan, premiums are deducted from his check in addition to taxes and clubhouse dues, resulting in a bimonthly check of around \$308. And he is paid only during the five-month season, netting approximately \$3,000 for the entire year. After receiving only a \$2,500 bonus three years ago, he now has little choice but to ask his parents for help.

When free agency came to baseball in 1975, it changed the face of the game, and it made the Major League Baseball Players Association into one of the most powerful labor unions in the world.

Major league salaries have since skyrocketed, from an average of \$44,676 in 1975 to more than \$3.2 million today. The minimum salary has also increased, from \$16,000 to \$400,000. While the rich are clearly getting

PAY TO PLAY

Based on analysis of salary information from hundreds of minor league free agents over the last four years, Baseball America has established season salary estimates for every minor league level. The data shows that, as described in the accompanying story, minor leaguers are paid a pittance early in their careers and before they win a 40-man roster spot. As players reach higher levels and establish themselves, however, their salaries increase significantly.

Here are the median season salaries for each level—the salary that falls in the middle of the range from low to high. Keep in mind that players are paid only during baseball season, so that's about five months' work for full-season leagues and about 10 weeks for short-season leagues.

LEVEL	LOW	HIGH	MEDIAN
Triple-A	\$7,000	\$696,720	\$50,000
Double-A	\$5,750	\$155,730	\$25,000
High Class A	\$5,500	\$80,000	\$10,000
Low Class A	\$5,500	\$40,000	\$8,500
Short-season	\$2,750	\$15,000	\$3,250
Latin America	\$1,625	\$3,125	\$1,750

much richer, the minor league player has been left behind, forcing many players to live on the verge of poverty.

A multitude of reasons exist for this situation. Chief among them is the large pool of players willing to do anything just for the opportunity. "I'd play for free," Giants minor leaguer Steve Palazzolo said. "It's harder to have that opinion the older you get, but yeah, I'd play for free. But I don't have a family to worry about."

Before signing with the Giants, Palazzolo played briefly in the Brewers organization and for three independent league teams. In 2004, he earned \$600 a month playing in the independent Frontier League. Other independent leagues pay even less, with salaries averaging as low as \$300 a month in the Continental League. This league even uses development players—players who actually pay for the opportunity to play, hoping to get noticed.

With so many players willing to play for little or no money, there is little incentive for owners to provide relief.

"Baseball can do whatever they want with minor league players' salaries," one minor league official said. "There are so many players that just want a chance."

Still, the situation may soon reach a breaking point. One minor leaguer in the Giants system could not afford to buy meals last season. Unable to pay his bills, he had resorted to credit cards, and the debt had piled up. So he forced himself to not eat until he reported to the clubhouse, stuffing down two mid-afternoon peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

"They bring in nutritionists and tell you to eat healthy. Sure!" Stanley said. "How are you supposed to eat healthy on \$20 a day?"

Meal money will increase to \$25 a day this season, but clubhouse dues are also increasing. Last year these mandatory dues reached \$14 a day in Triple-A and \$8 a day in the high Class A Carolina League.

Some officials are beginning to see problems. One minor league coach told me recently that he had two sons, one in the minor leagues and one in college. The one in college worked part-time at a grocery store, yet he made more money than the one playing professional baseball.

"It just doesn't make sense," he said. "They could easily afford an increase if they wanted, but they just don't want to do it. They'd rather

spend that extra \$150,000 on a big leaguer's salary."

Players who prove themselves at the Triple-A level can earn a comfortable living. But getting there can be a true battle of attrition. For every veteran who thrives in the upper minors, many others fall by the wayside before graduating from A-ball.

While players under complete team control make relative peanuts, those whose services are in demand make enough that they might not even need to secure offseason employment. The biggest earners among the minor league set fall in to two categories:

■ Members of the 40-man roster. Players sign split major league/minor league contracts once they're added to the 40-man, with their pay rate dictated by the Collective Bargaining Agreement. While those in the big leagues earn at least the minimum of \$400,000, those on the minor league side are paid based on their experience. First-year members earn a minimum of \$32,500 in the minors, while second- and third-year members earn a minimum of \$65,000. However, if a player spends time with the big club in one season, his pay rate the following year must equal at least 60 percent of his total earnings from the year before. Factoring in the higher big league pay rate, a player's minor league salary could be two or three times more than the minimum.

■ Minor league free agents. To fill the gaps in Triple-A, organizations often turn to the minor league free agent. The most coveted free agents can make as much as \$12,000-\$25,000 a month, depending on the organization. That works out to a cool \$60,000-\$125,000 for five months of work.

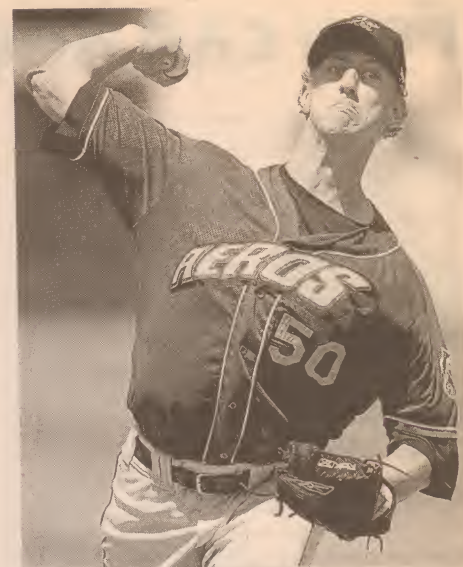
"That's a competitive market, the six-year free agent market," a former major league general manager said. "You can go from that \$2,150 a month, and if you become a six-year free agent, you have a chance to at least double or triple that right away."

For the rank and file, though, the struggle continues, and most people in the game say that players should simply be happy to have a job given the state of the economy. Complicating matters, players receive no paychecks while attending instructional leagues or spring training. These events effectively turn the five-month season into seven months, giving players only a few months in the offseason to find a job and earn supplemental income.

Another factor in maintaining such low salaries is the lack of labor organization for minor leaguers. The rules of the MLBPA recognize "major league players, and individuals who may become major league players" as members, but this is interpreted as only major leaguers and players on a team's 40-man roster. All other players are on their own, working at the pleasure of their organization.

Without a union, and with baseball's minor league reserve clause upheld by court decisions, minor league players have no way to challenge the decisions of baseball management. The 2006 Collective Bargaining Agreement, for instance, tightened eligibility for the Rule 5 draft, but minor leaguers lacked representation in negotiations that directly affected almost every one of them.

"On one side you have a group that is essentially impotent, and on the other side a powerful group that is making decisions



Indians farmhand Erik Stiller recognizes the value of a union but isn't sure he'd join one

based on what is best for their business," says sports economist Andrew Zimbalist, most recently the author of "In the Best Interest of Baseball: The Revolutionary Reign of Bud Selig." "There's very little bargaining leverage on the part of the minor leaguers."

Minor league hockey players and minor league umpires have unions, but baseball players remain skeptical. Erik Stiller, an Indians pitcher out of Princeton, recognizes the utility of a union, but isn't sure he would join one.

"Joining a union is no small decision," Stiller said. "I would want to understand how effective and well-organized it would be."

Many players echo the same sentiment, worried that any action upsetting the status quo would prompt owners to take punitive actions against those involved. The prospects for change seem unlikely, as owners will be reluctant to alter the structure on their own.

"It's beneficial to baseball owners to keep (salaries) where they are at," Zimbalist said. With no pressure from players, they're likely to remain stagnant.

While minor league salaries have remained low, the business of minor league baseball boomed over the past 20 years. Attendance has risen and franchise values have soared, though profit margins for most teams remain thin.

This has little effect on the players, however, because minor league owners pay no part of their salaries. That remains the sole responsibility of the major league teams. Some players have suggested changing this, but minor league owners have already taken on a lot more development costs in recent years.

"Tremendous amounts of cost have already been shifted to the minor league system in the past 10 to 15 years, and there would be a great amount of pushback," said Charlie Dowd, the former general manager of the Connecticut Defenders.

Players have also suggested that teams help them pay for housing, but Dowd and others say this too remains unlikely because it would be an additional cost for minor league teams. Representatives from both MLB and MiLB said they have heard no talk of this plan or any plan to increase salaries, and to their knowledge there is no talk of alleviating the burden on players in any manner.

With no change in the foreseeable future, minor leaguers will continue to cram into apartments and host families' houses—and perhaps skip meals—to save money. Their air mattresses will sit in rooms decorated only by mold. And they'll gladly accept this sacrifice. They're chasing a dream.

Garrett Broshuis is a former minor league pitcher in the Giants system and a frequent contributor to Baseball America.

Dream jobs often come at price in minors

BY JOSH LEVENTHAL

It is a statement that those who work at minor league ballparks hear almost every day on the job: "You're so lucky. I wish I could work in baseball."

Most people who do make a living in the sport will grant that they are in fact lucky, because they do enjoy their work. But while a love for baseball may be shared by those who pay to root for the home team and the people who draw paychecks at the ballpark, making a career out of the National Pastime takes that passion to another level.

Long hours, often for little pay, that take you away from loved ones every summer is a requirement for most any job in baseball—whether you're a manager in the dugout, a general manager in the front office or a clubhouse manager. Yet despite the conditions, those who work in the game invariably refer to their careers as dream jobs.

"When you tell them you work 100 hours a week and that you work during the offseason, they look at you a little differently. That's before you tell them that you work 100 hours a week and you don't make a lot of money," said Portland Sea Dogs media-relations director Chris Cameron, who went on to add that he couldn't imagine a different career. "I love the game of baseball and I enjoy going to work. Every morning I get up and go to a baseball field for an office. Getting to know a lot of players before they go on to the (parent club) Red Sox is a rewarding part of the job. But the best part is seeing 7,000 fans have a great time at the ballpark because of what we do. That's rewarding."

To find out what it takes to work in baseball—and what you make doing it—we talked to people who make the games happen 140 nights a year. Though pay is hardly uniform around the sport, interviews with team officials at different classifications helped provide a standard range for a variety of positions.

Much has changed since Dave Rosenfield got his first job in baseball for Class C Bakersfield in 1956. Rosenfield sported the rare title of player/general manager—though most of his duties focused on the latter.

"I had played briefly professionally, though not real well. I had played five years in college, two years in the Navy during the Korean War—I played on a team that won the service championship of the world," said Rosenfield, adding that the lack of a support staff in Bakersfield left little time for the playing field. "I did not have another front-office employee. There was a lady that ran the concessions . . . I did the complete set of books and I answered the telephones. I was a one-man front office."

And for all that, what did Rosenfield earn? "I made \$450 a month. And I had to pay my own car expenses."

While there are few around the game who can match the longevity of the 78-year-old Norfolk Tides general manager, many of those who share the same job title today can relate to Rosenfield's career track—starting at the bottom and doing a little bit of everything on their way to the top.

No, they likely didn't work in the Three-I League for Topeka like Rosenfield, who was left with "a house full of furniture and no job" when the circuit folded in 1962. And maybe they can't sympathize with Rosenfield packing up his family and leaving town before deciding if he was going to take the GM job in Waterloo, Iowa—or the assistant GM gig in Norfolk, Va. "I told the moving company to come next Tuesday," Rosenfield recalled. "When they said, 'Where are we taking your furniture?' I said, 'I don't know, I'll call you.'"

Waterloo was too cold, so Rosenfield pushed on to Norfolk—and he has been there ever since.

The stories of minor league executives usually follow the plot line of breaking in as an intern, working for peanuts in the box office

or sales, before a director job in another town leads to an assistant GM job elsewhere, before a few more promotions put them in charge of a team.

"If you can make it in baseball, you can make it anywhere," Huntsville Stars GM Buck Rogers said.

He should know. Rogers got his first job in baseball as an entry-level salesman for Fayetteville in 1997. Rogers had just been "another fan sitting in the cheap seats" while he was in the Army and stationed at nearby Fort Bragg, but after he received his medical discharge from the military he approached the team's front office about a job specializing in military sales and marketing. So the team hired him for just under \$10,000 a year, before he eventually became a general manager jobs in the Florida State League.

Salaries in the minor leagues have improved over the years, but not a whole lot.

College students or recent graduates looking to gain experience with a full-season team as an intern can expect to earn between \$600-\$1,000 a month over a five-month season (teams will often pitch in or provide housing). Those smiling employees you see dancing on the dugouts or launching hot dogs into the crowd are typically interns breaking into baseball. Some teams offer internships for college credit, paying a modest stipend (around \$25 a game) while giving students access to all areas of the business.

Entry-level positions with a team typically range in salary from \$8,000-\$24,000, a year depending on the cost of living and the size of the market. As people gain experience and work their way up, salaries begin to climb as well. Director positions usually begin at \$25,000 and top out around \$50,000—with sales jobs earning extra commissions. Assistant GMs earn between \$35,000-\$80,000. General managers' salaries usually begin around \$45,000, with most Triple-A GMs topping the \$100,000 mark.

"You have so many people coming out of



Veteran general manager Dave Rosenfield has made a living working in baseball since 1956

college thinking that they are going to make big bucks right from jump street," Rogers said. "You have to understand that you have to get a position. Then you have to prove your net worth, especially when there is a recession . . ."

"This is a seasonal business. You have to bring some creativeness to the table. It's not a normal 9-to-5 job, it's not a Fortune 500 company, it's not even a McDonald's where you're open 365 days a year. You're not going to make big bucks coming into this business. Go get a key position with a team—it may not even be what you want to do. You may have majored in communications, but there is an opening in the team store with a team that you think is a good fit. So you may want to go work in the team store until that communications position opens up."

Cameron is proof that Rogers' theory works.

Cameron graduated from Southern New Hampshire with a degree in sport man-

MONEY MATTERS



Baseball America used archival research and personal interviews with people who work in the minor leagues (or used to) to determine salary ranges for just about everyone who works in a minor league ballpark. You won't be surprised to learn that the rank and file of the minor league are not getting rich.

These are the typical salaries for the people who work in these parks every day. Keep in mind that numbers vary greatly depending on the person's experience level and the market they're working in. Unless otherwise noted, these are annual salaries. Players and other on-field personnel are paid only during the season.

1. General Manager	\$45,000-\$100,000	11. Concessions Worker	\$8-\$9 (per hour)
2. Assistant General Manager	\$35,000-\$80,000	12. First-Year Pro	\$1,000-\$4,000
3. Director of Sales	\$30,000-\$75,000 (plus incentives)	13. Independent League Player	\$1,000-\$10,000
4. Director of Media Relation	\$25,000-\$50,000	14. Class A Player	\$4,000-\$12,000
5. Director of Community Relations	\$25,000-\$50,000	15. Double-A Player	\$10,000-\$40,000
6. Entry Level Worker	\$8,000-\$24,000	16. Triple-A Veteran	\$40,000-\$80,000
7. Intern	\$600-\$1,000	17. 40-Man Roster Player	\$32,500-\$100,000
8. PA Announcer	\$40-\$75 (per game)	18. Manager	\$45,000-\$85,000
9. Usher	\$25 (per game)	19. Coach	\$35,000-\$50,000
10. Clubby	\$5,000-\$10,000 (plus dues and tips)	20. Mascot	\$50-\$75 (per game)

agement and the goal of landing a media relations job. But when a job opened in the ticket office in Portland, just 30 minutes from his hometown of Brunswick, Cameron jumped at the opportunity.

The Sea Dogs did not have a dedicated media-relations position when Cameron, 33, started in 1999. So he spent two years gaining experience in the ticket office, all the while prodding his GM about the need for a media relations guy (namely him). Two years later Cameron got the job, making around \$20,000, and has spent nine years proving he was the right hire for one of the most taxing positions on a team.

On a typical game day, Cameron arrives at the ballpark by 8 a.m. The day is spent updating the team Website, compiling statistics and writing press releases, organizing community programs and coordinating player interviews with the media. Once the game starts that evening, Cameron resides in the press box. He usually returns home a little before midnight, ready to start over again in eight hours.

"If I could choose one job in baseball it would be what I'm doing right now," Cameron said. "In a media relations role, you handle a lot of the baseball information but you also get to see a lot of the business side of the organization as well."

Media relations is among the more popular positions on a staff. But nobody gets rich doing it, with salaries ranging from \$20,000-\$50,000. One general manager estimated that 90 percent of the 300 resumes he receives a year are for media relations positions.

This is not to say that there is no money to be made in minor league baseball. As is the case in most industries, the higher-paying



Birmingham clubbie Jeff Perro (left) and Portland PR director Chris Cameron are living out a dream



positions are found in sales. A director of sales making a base salary of \$50,000 can often earn six figures after commissions and bonuses are included. One team president in a major market said he earned roughly \$250,000 last season including bonuses and incentives.

"If you can sell, you can make money, it's the universal trade," the team president said. "Whether it's baseball or whatever, if you can do that you'll always have a job and always make money. When you start talking about the soft (non-sales) jobs, there are a billion people who want those jobs and who will do them for next to nothing. You've got to be able to understand what the numbers are telling you and how to read those numbers. If you can do that, you can be a general manager in any minor league."

A Triple-A general manager says the top

sales people will often make more money than anyone else in the front office.

"No matter what position you're at, entry level or general manager, if you get into the business you do it because you have a love of the game or have a love of the atmosphere," the GM said. "I'm sure it's both. For folks to do it long term, it's a great place to be a part of—any minor league team. It's not like you're selling vacuum cleaners or gadgets. You're selling baseball. That's a unique thing to sell."

Beyond the minor league front office are those on the field, all of whom are hoping to make the minor leagues just a stop on their way to the big leagues.

We detail the salaries of minor league players in the accompanying story, but coaches, managers and umpires also struggle with relatively low-paying jobs in hopes of finding a payday down the road. Minor league managers, who almost always are working on one-year contracts with the club's parent organization, typically make between \$20,000-\$60,000, depending on the level and their experience. Those with experience in the big leagues may get a little bit more.

"No one is making \$100,000, I can tell you that," a former longtime minor league manager said.

The pay scale for coaches is even lower, with most making less than \$35,000. Major league organizations also employ the trainers for each team, and their pay scale is also low, as low as \$15,000 a season for people who typically have master's degrees. Again, supply and demand dictates such low salaries, with so many people clamoring for these jobs.

Umpires may have the hardest road of all, with all the travel and day-to-day demands of players and managers, with lower pay and tougher conditions. Groups of umpires typically travel together in a van and share hotel rooms, and they also earn a starting salary of \$9,000 a season, even after the minor league umps went on strike in 2006 to improve their salaries and working conditions.

Watching it all, and caring for all the on-field personnel, is a minor league employee most fans never get a glimpse of: the clubhouse attendant.

Jeff Perro is entering his second season with the Birmingham Barons and has worked as a minor league clubbie off and on since 2001. Though it is a grind taking care of almost every need for a team during the season, from organizing pre- and postgame meals to doing laundry, the offseason is much more difficult.

Like minor league players, Perro's pay ends with the season in September, leaving him in search of offseason work. Perro spent this past offseason waiting tables at a restaurant in Birmingham and picked up extra money around Christmas time by designing marketing fliers for a sandwich shop. Ultimately, Perro wants to be among the clubbies who get jobs in winter leagues, and then head off to spring training when February rolls around.

But with 160 minor league teams, roughly half of which employ two clubbies, those jobs are in high demand.

"I love what I do, but I hate the offseason," Perro said.

Having a love for the game is certainly a job requirement for a clubhouse attendant, as 16-hour days are standard during the season. Perro describes his duties as "a little bit of everything," and it is a wide-ranging list: team laundry, budget and prepare the pregame spread and postgame meal, stock clubhouse with shampoo, razors and other toiletries, unpack bags after road trips in the early morning hours, and keep the clubhouse tidy.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Perro's job is how he gets paid. A portion of his salary, roughly \$800-\$1,000 a month, is paid by the Barons (who are reimbursed by their major league affiliate, the White Sox). Perro then charges each member of the team clubhouse dues of \$11 a day. From those dues, Perro purchases the pregame and postgame meals, along with clubhouse supplies. He tries to leave himself roughly \$1 a day from each player (plus tips), usually working out to about \$50 a game. Perro's goal is to earn about \$2,000 a month.

The meals Perro prepares will vary. A typical pregame spread will feature lunch meat and peanut-butter and jelly sandwiches. "Some guys have to have a PBJ every game," he says. "I could put out steak and they would say, 'Where is the PBJ?'"

Players are not the only ones hoping to rise through the minors and reach the major leagues, however. Broadcasters also endure long hours and even longer bus trips as they work their way up through the minors behind a microphone in hopes of fulfilling a big league dream.

Durham Bulls broadcaster Neil Solondz is entering his 13th season as a professional baseball announcer, including the past seven with the Bulls. He started out calling independent Somerset Patriots games.

As is the case with most minor league broadcasters, Solondz works a day job and gets an extra stipend during the season for his work in the broadcast booth. Solondz does sales, while many broadcasters double as a team's media-relations official. Solondz admits that the bulk of his salary comes from his day job. A typical broadcaster will make around \$1,200-\$1,500 a month calling games.

"I have been able to make this a success as a full-time opportunity because I am also doing sales and sponsorships for the club," Solondz said. "It enables you to do what you want to do most, which is during the season stay in the booth and dream what players dream—and that is hopefully one day to do major league baseball games."

Pulling double duty makes for long days. During the season, Solondz arrives at the ballpark at 10 a.m. after getting a few hours of quality time in with his two young daughters. He'll focus on his sales job until players and coaches arrive at the ballpark a few hours before gametime, and then glean as much information as possible for his evening broadcast. The workday ends usually an hour after the final out.

Solondz remains hopeful that the long hours will pay off with a call to the big leagues. He sends out roughly 90 recordings of his broadcasts each season, and he's had a few interviews with big league teams.

"The rise to the majors for a broadcaster is different than a player," Solondz said. "The potential of your career is much longer, but you also have to be more patient. A big league broadcaster could be there until they're 80 and only so many jobs open up . . . So it is important to make yourself as diverse as possible and as invaluable to the company as possible."

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Greenberg gets the call to the majors

BY JOSH LEVENTHAL

Todd Parnell was certain he would never work for Chuck Greenberg. But Greenberg isn't accustomed to taking no for an answer.

Greenberg had just bought the Eastern League's Altoona Curve in 2001, and his search for a general manager led him to Parnell, who was then a 35-year-old running the South Atlantic League's Kannapolis Intimidators in his native North Carolina.

"I told him right out of the chute that I wasn't interested, and three hours later he told me to figure out my compensation package," Parnell said. "I had built my dream house on Lake Norman, was working near the area I'm from. But the more we talked, there was an instant connection, instant energy with each other. I felt in talking to him there would be some special things happening."

After a three-hour conversation, Greenberg knew he had his man. Parnell signed on with Greenberg and helped build Altoona into a model franchise over the next few years, the first of many winning moves for Greenberg on his rise through the minors to the majors—a familiar path for players but not one often followed by owners.

Now eight years and three teams later, Greenberg is on the cusp of purchasing the Texas Rangers as the managing partner and CEO of an ownership group that includes Nolan Ryan. The deal to purchase the team from bankrupt owner Tom Hicks has been held up by Hicks' creditors, but it's expected to be approved by the 29 other major league owners as soon as possible this spring.

"I never sat around and thought that I'd like to own a major league team someday, but certainly I always thought growing up that I wanted to be a part of sports," said Greenberg, a Pittsburgh lawyer. "Baseball has always been extra special to me. I can't say I charted a course for this, but in hindsight I'd say this is a culmination of a dream and I can't wait to get started."

Greenberg, 48, got his first taste of professional sports when he helped his friend and hockey legend Mario Lemieux purchase the Pittsburgh Penguins and save the team from bankruptcy in 1999. Greenberg became the club's attorney and led sometimes heated negotiations with the city for the Penguins' new arena—a \$290 million

venue set to debut next season.

But it was in the minors where Greenberg cut his teeth as a team owner, an opportunity that came in 2001 when bickering Altoona owners Bob Lozinak and Tate DeWeese read about Greenberg's success with Lemieux.

"They told me they have this nice little franchise in this nice part of town with this beautiful little ballpark," Greenberg said. "The only problem was that they couldn't get along and that the only way to settle their differences was to sell. They asked me if I was interested, and sight unseen, I said sure."

Greenberg overcame the collapse of the financial sector following the Sept. 11 attacks and closed the deal on the eve of the 2002 season. What followed was a whirlwind course in Ownership 101 that shaped how Greenberg and those who work for him conducted business.

"That first season was wild in a number of respects," said Greenberg, who sold Altoona back to Lozinak in 2008—at a considerable profit—to focus on his other two teams, the Myrtle Beach Pelicans (Carolina) and State College Spikes (New York-Penn), and the consulting group he started with Parnell. "I had spent my career, up to that point, working with sports franchises and franchise owners and having a good birds-eye view of everything in between. But it is still different the first time on your own."

What developed was an organization committed to creativity and customer service, and it started at the top. After an elderly fan once complained to Greenberg that the stadium's picnic tables were being monopolized by corporate outings, for example, Greenberg made sure more tables were added to the concourse for the next game.

"He is involved and participatory, but that's not a bad thing," Parnell said. "There are some baseball players who are really, really good in their own right. And there are players who are really, really good in their own right and make guys around them better—and that is Chuck Greenberg."

The idea for the now famous Awful Night came after the 2002 season during a team retreat, when Greenberg suggested that because they spend so much time trying to do things right, on one night the team should be committed to doing everything wrong. What resulted was an evening at the ballpark when every player's name was misspelled and vendors added Spam

to the menu. Every other night, however, Greenberg worked to ensure the ballpark experience was anything but awful for fans.

Greenberg made good on his promise of a grand future in 2006 when he purchased Myrtle Beach and debuted a new franchise in State College, playing in a new ballpark it shared with Penn State. Parnell supervised both operations in addition to serving as president of the Greenberg Sports Group.

"Opening up a new ballpark and purchasing a new team within 10 days is not a good prescription for mental health or a good night's sleep," Greenberg said.

Greenberg's goal was to replicate the Altoona experience at his two new ballparks, which was easier in State College because it was close to Altoona and a blank slate. Myrtle Beach was more of a challenge.

Greenberg hired North Johnson, a longtime Carolina and California League executive, to run the team and embarked on a \$2.5 million ballpark renovation.

Johnson said Greenberg's brilliance comes from his ability to see both the small and big picture. It was Greenberg who suggested that the Pelicans move their ticket booth and add a concession stand where fans enter the ballpark in right field.

"The renovation seems like a simple thing, but it had a huge impact on our fans' experience walking into the ballpark," said Johnson, who left the Pelicans this winter to become GM of the Gwinnett Braves (International). "Chuck understands the right sensory experiences that fans need to have. We put in a million-dollar scoreboard, which is unheard of for a Class A team. We have cameras all over the park and a production room that is state of the art. He pushed us to make sure that we are always thinking out of the box."

The Pelicans set an attendance record in 2008, when they had one of the best teams in the minors, and did the same in 2009, when they had one of the worst.

"It took a while, but by the time of our second full season in 2008, it felt like going to a ballpark in Altoona except for nicer weather in the spring," Greenberg said. "I had friends who would go from one ballpark to another and see if they could spot any instances if we were coming up short in one area. While our presentation was unique to the community, the spirit and energy and



Chuck Greenberg brings a business model that succeeded in the minors to the Rangers

fun and irreverence was common to all three ballparks."

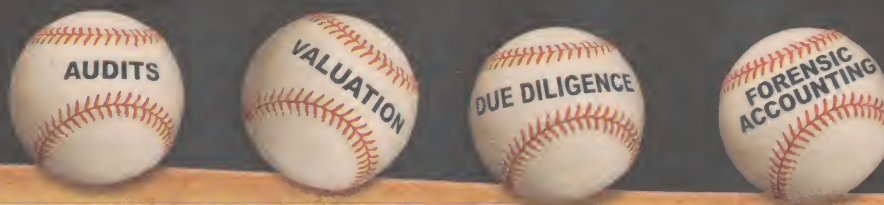
Now Greenberg has to answer the same question as every top prospect moving up from the minors: Can he make it in the big leagues?

Greenberg has no intention of turning Rangers Ballpark in Arlington into an oversized minor league facility; Awful Night will not follow him to Texas. Instead, he hopes to merge the customer service and ballpark experience he mastered in the minors with the on-field traditions of the major leagues.

"While we have to be committed to building a ballclub that can win on the field, that is not a substitute for getting out in the community, creating a family-friendly environment, creating a fun atmosphere at the ballpark and doing the things that fans will enjoy," Greenberg said. "Being completely focused on winning and being completely focused on delivering a great product—those are two things that are not mutually exclusive."

Those who have worked with Greenberg have little doubt that the model he has built in the minors will work in the big leagues.

"I think he will be a new breed of owners," Parnell said. "I think he may watch a few games in the owner's suite, but I don't think he'll be comfortable up there. We grew up together in the minor leagues walking the concourse."



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Nationals pitchers top position ranks

Ranking prospects ultimately comes down to one simple factor—would you trade one guy for the other? We wouldn't trade Jason Heyward for any other minor leaguer, hence his ranking as the No. 1 prospect in the game.

Yet a team of Jason Heywards, while tempting, probably wouldn't work (after all, he throws left-handed), so the value of players both as prospects and as trade chips often hinges not just on talent but on what positions the players can handle defensively. Ranking players by position helps identify where the talent is—in 2010, it's behind the plate. Those players already have extra value for playing a premium defensive position, as do those at shortstop. It's also why we break out center fielders from their corner outfield counterparts.

We followed our Top 100 rankings with a few notable exceptions, which are noted in the copy below. But because we love to rank prospects, we went well beyond our Top 100 in every category as well.

Catcher ★★★★★

The best-stocked position in the minors right now particularly stands out against the pool of other position players. Montero may not be a catcher long-term because of defensive concerns, but he has yet to play a game at another position. Posey and Santana are almost locks to be big league starters in 2011. The offensive firepower in this crop stands out, while Sanchez—the fourth overall pick in last year's draft—has the best defensive tools and ability.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Jesus Montero, Yankees	Double-A
2.	Buster Posey, Giants	Majors
3.	Carlos Santana, Indians	Double-A
4.	Derek Norris, Nationals	Low A
5.	Jason Castro, Astros	Double-A
6.	Wilson Ramos, Twins	Double-A
7.	Tyler Flowers, White Sox	Majors
8.	Tony Sanchez, Pirates	Low A
9.	Travis d'Arnaud, Blue Jays	Low A
10.	Adam Moore, Mariners	Majors
11.	Hank Conger, Angels	Double-A
12.	Austin Romine, Yankees	High A
13.	Max Stassi, Athletics	Short-Season
14.	Wil Myers, Royals	Rookie
15.	Sebastian Valle, Phillies	Low A
16.	Jonathan Lucroy, Brewers	Double-A
17.	Wilin Rosario, Rockies	High A
18.	Alex Avila, Tigers	Majors
19.	Christian Bethancourt, Braves	Rookie
20.	J.P. Arencibia, Blue Jays	Triple-A
21.	Josh Thole, Mets	Majors
22.	Gary Sanchez, Yankees	Did not play
23.	Luke Bailey, Rays	Did not play
24.	Tommy Joseph, Giants	Did not play
25.	Lou Marson, Indians	Majors

First Base ★★

The 2008 draft included a record seven first basemen in the first round, a group that included the top player on this list, Smoak, as well as Alonso, Davis and Hosmer. Still, most of the members of this list have warts, from defensive questions (Carter, Allen, Cooper) to poor 2009 seasons (Anderson, Hosmer) to power production (Snyder, Sanchez). Smoak is the best bet to be a star.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Justin Smoak, Rangers	Triple-A
2.	Logan Morrison, Marlins	Double-A
3.	Brett Wallace, Blue Jays	Triple-A
4.	Chris Carter, Athletics	Triple-A
5.	Freddie Freeman, Braves	Double-A
6.	Yonder Alonso, Reds	Double-A
7.	Ike Davis, Mets	Double-A
8.	Lars Anderson, Red Sox	Double-A
9.	Brandon Snyder, Orioles	Triple-A
10.	Eric Hosmer, Royals	High A
11.	Anthony Rizzo, Red Sox	High A

12.	Brandon Allen, Diamondbacks	Majors
13.	Chris Marrero, Nationals	High A
14.	David Cooper, Blue Jays	Double-A
15.	Gaby Sanchez, Marlins	Majors

Second Base ★★

Frankly, we've under-ranked second basemen historically. Chase Utley, Aaron Hill and Dustin Pedroia appeared on Top 100s, but not in the top 50; Robinson Cano never made a Top 100, nor did Brian Roberts. Just two second sackers made our Top 100 this year, and one of those—Ackley, the No. 2 overall pick in last year's draft—has never played an official game there. Lawrie and Cardenas may end up at other positions as well, while Kipnis joins Ackley in trying to make the move to second while having outfield as a fallback position.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Dustin Ackley, Mariners	Did not play
2.	Brett Lawrie, Brewers	Double-A
3.	Reese Havens, Mets	High A
4.	Jemile Weeks, Athletics	Double-A
5.	Scott Sizemore, Tigers	Triple-A
6.	Adrian Cardenas, Athletics	Triple-A
7.	Eric Young, Rockies	Majors
8.	Logan Watkins, Cubs	Short-Season
9.	Derrick Gibson, Red Sox	Short-Season
10.	Jason Kipnis, Indians	Short-Season

Third Base ★★

Defense may move several of these prospects off the hot corner eventually as they move up the minor league ladder. Alvarez will almost surely move across the diamond to first base at some point. The Reds haven't given Frazier any indication of what position he'll play next week, not to mention long-term. He has played less third base than first or second, or shortstop, or even left field as the Reds move him all over the field. But scouts have said for years that he profiles best at third, so that's where we have him listed.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Pedro Alvarez, Pirates	Double-A
2.	Lonnie Chisenhall, Indians	Double-A
3.	Josh Bell, Orioles	Double-A
4.	Todd Frazier, Reds	Triple-A
5.	Josh Vitters, Cubs	High A
6.	Mike Moustakas, Royals	High A
7.	Mat Gamel, Brewers	Majors
8.	James Darnell, Padres	High A
9.	Miguel Sano, Twins	Did not play
10.	Matt Dominguez, Marlins	Double-A
11.	Bobby Borchering, Diamondbacks	Rookie
12.	Danny Valencia, Twins	Triple-A
13.	Logan Forsythe, Padres	Double-A
14.	Juan Francisco, Reds	Majors
15.	Alex Liddi, Mariners	High A



Dustin Ackley moves to the top of our second-base rankings, though he's never officially played there

Shortstop ★★

Escobar has the everyday job in Milwaukee sewn up, and Brignac seems ready to contribute full-time in Tampa after two seasons at Triple-A. Desmond and 20-year-old Tejada, likely to open the season as the Mets' big league starter with Jose Reyes slowed by a thyroid condition, also should see big league time in 2010. The rest of the list is marked by precocious talents such as Gordon, Castro (who reached Double-A as a teen) and Iglesias, the Cuban who impressed scouts with his 80 glove in the Arizona Fall League. His former Cuban teammate Adeinis Hechavarria—who pushed Iglesias to second when they were teammates—had not officially signed at press time, but reports had tied the 21-year-old to the Blue Jays.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Alcides Escobar, Brewers	Majors
2.	Starlin Castro, Cubs	Double-A
3.	Dee Gordon, Dodgers	Low A
4.	Grant Green, Athletics	High A
5.	Reid Brignac, Rays	Majors
6.	Tim Beckham, Rays	Low A
7.	Jio Mier, Astros	Rookie
8.	Wilmer Flores, Mets	Low A
9.	Jose Iglesias, Red Sox	Did not play
10.	Hak-Ju Lee, Cubs	Short-Season
11.	Ian Desmond, Nationals	Majors
12.	Danny Espinosa, Nationals	High A
13.	Jurickson Profar, Rangers	Did not play
14.	Chase d'Arnaud, Pirates	High A
15.	Ruben Tejada, Mets	Double-A

Center Field ★★

Several center fielders broke through from the minors to the majors last year, from Dexter Fowler and Colby Rasmus to 2009 Rookie of the Year Andrew McCutchen. Jennings could have the same kind of impact in his rookie season once the Rays call him up. Tate had a rough go of it since signing as the No. 3 pick in last year's draft, with a sports hernia and then a broken jaw (sustained in an ATV accident) adding injury to injury. Westmoreland and Mitchell ranked higher than this on our Top 100, but neither is expected to play in 2010. Westmoreland had brain surgery

just before BA went to press to remove a "cavernous malformation" in his brain, leaving his career completely up in the air. Mitchell has a conventional torn tendon in his right ankle that required surgery and was expected to miss the season, a bummer for sure but nothing like what Westmoreland has to endure.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Desmond Jennings, Rays	Triple-A
2.	Aaron Hicks, Twins	Low A
3.	Donavan Tate, Padres	Did not play
4.	Brett Jackson, Cubs	Low A
5.	Austin Jackson, Tigers	Triple-A
6.	Mike Trout, Angels	Low A
7.	Ryan Westmoreland, Red Sox	Short-Season
8.	Jared Mitchell, White Sox	Low A
9.	Peter Bourjos, Angels	Double-A
10.	Ben Revere, Twins	High A
11.	Michael Brantley, Indians	Majors
12.	Slade Heathcott, Yankees	Rookie
13.	A.J. Pollock, Diamondbacks	Low A
14.	Raymond Fuentes, Red Sox	Rookie
15.	Jordan Danks, White Sox	Double-A

Corner Outfield ★★★★★

The four-star rating of this group rests largely on the top of the list. Heyward was the story of spring training; the Minor League Player of the Year seems likely to bypass Triple-A and jump straight to Atlanta. Stanton has less polish but more raw power, while Brown has some similarities to Heyward as a fellow Georgia prep product with athleticism and tools, but he lacks Heyward's pure hitting ability. Taylor could post numbers to rival Heyward as a rookie, provide his new organization gives him a chance. Decker remains one of the more unconventional prospects in the game with well below-average athleticism but above-average offensive instincts, including power and patience.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Jason Heyward, Braves	Triple-A
2.	Mike Stanton, Marlins	Double-A
3.	Domonic Brown, Phillies	Double-A
4.	Michael Taylor, Athletics	Triple-A
5.	Michael Saunders, Mariners	Majors

6. Josh Reddick, Red Sox	Majors
7. Fernando Martinez, Mets	Majors
8. Jaff Decker, Padres	Low A
9. Thomas Neal, Giants	High A
10. Chris Heisey, Reds	Majors
11. Ryan Kalish, Red Sox	Double-A
12. Jose Tabata, Pirates	Triple-A
13. Nick Weglarz, Indians	Double-A
14. Sean Doolittle, Athletics	Triple-A
15. Andrew Lambo, Dodgers	Double-A
16. Tim Wheeler, Rockies	Short-Season
17. Mitch Moreland, Rangers	Double-A
18. Wilkin Ramirez, Tigers	Majors
19. David Lough, Royals	Double-A
20. Angel Morales, Twins	Low A

Righthanded Starter ★★★★★

It's just spring training, but Strasburg quickly has established himself as the Nationals' best pitcher. How long they can keep him on the farm remains to be seen. Feliz and Scheppers, two of the hardest throwers on the list after Strasburg, may wind up in the bullpen, but the Rangers intend to give them every chance to remain starters. Mejia—who has a chance to start the season in the Mets' bullpen—Knapp and White also have a good shot at winding up as relievers. Davis is the best bet among this group to make a run at Rookie of the Year honors.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Stephen Strasburg, Nationals	Did not play
2.	Neftali Feliz, Rangers	Majors
3.	Jeremy Hellickson, Rays	Triple-A
4.	Casey Kelly, Red Sox	High A
5.	Kyle Drabek, Phillies	Double-A
6.	Jacob Turner, Tigers	Did not play
7.	Wade Davis, Rays	Majors
8.	Jarrod Parker, Diamondbacks	Double-A
9.	Aaron Crow, Royals	Did not play
10.	Tanner Scheppers, Rangers	Did not play
11.	Chris Withrow, Dodgers	Double-A
12.	Zach Wheeler, Giants	Did not play
13.	Shelby Miller, Cardinals	Low A
14.	Julio Teheran, Braves	Low A
15.	Jenrry Mejia, Mets	Double-A
16.	Simon Castro, Padres	Low A
17.	Kyle Gibson, Twins	Did not play
18.	Jason Knapp, Indians	Low A
19.	Alex White, Indians	Did not play
20.	Daniel Hudson, White Sox	Majors
21.	Alex Colome, Rays	Short-Season
22.	Arodys Vizcaino, Yankees	Short-Season
23.	Jhoulys Chacin, Rockies	Majors
24.	Mike Leake, Reds	Did not play
25.	Jordan Lyles, Astros	Low A
26.	Jay Jackson, Cubs	Triple-A
27.	Jake Arrieta, Orioles	Triple-A
28.	Brad Lincoln, Pirates	Triple-A
29.	Hector Rondon, Indians	Triple-A
30.	Junichi Tazawa, Red Sox	Majors
31.	Chad Jenkins, Blue Jays	Did not play
32.	Trevor May, Phillies	Low A
33.	Ethan Martin, Dodgers	Low A
34.	Zach McAllister, Yankees	Double-A
35.	Tyson Ross, Athletics	Double-A

Lefthanded Starter ★★★★★

This list reflects small changes from our Top 100 as well. Bumgarner's performance in the minors has been dominant, but his diminished velocity in spring training—perhaps attributable to his long, slinging arm action—raises doubts about whether his approach will work in the majors. He moves down in part to accommodate Chapman, who showed 100 mph heat in spring training. If the Reds' \$30 million man doesn't spend most of the season in the big league rotation, it will be an upset. As with the righthander list, some of these pitchers—such as Hagadone, Figueroa and Kiker—could wind up in the bullpen.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Brian Matusz, Orioles	Majors
2.	Martin Perez, Rangers	Double-A

3. Aroldis Chapman, Reds	Did not play
4. Tyler Matzek, Rockies	Did not play
5. Madison Bumgarner, Giants	Majors
6. Christian Friedrich, Rockies	High A
7. Matt Moore, Rays	Low A
8. Mike Montgomery, Royals	High A
9. Nick Hagadone, Indians	High A
10. Casey Crosby, Tigers	Low A
11. Zach Britton, Orioles	High A
12. Chad James, Marlins	Did not play
13. Noel Arguelles, Royals	Did not play
14. Mike Minor, Braves	Low A
15. Pedro Figueroa, Athletics	High A
16. Jaime Garcia, Cardinals	Triple-A
17. Robbie Ross, Rangers	Short-Season
18. Alex Torres, Rays	Double-A
19. Kasey Kiker, Rangers	Double-A
20. Aaron Miller, Dodgers	Low A
21. Danny Duffy, Royals	High A
22. Manny Banuelos, Yankees	High A
23. Kyle Lobstein, Rays	Short-Season
24. Trevor Reckling, Angels	Double-A
25. Jon Niese, Mets	Majors

Reliever ★★★★★

While it's still true that most of the closers in

the big leagues spent more time in the minors as starters than as relievers, that is starting to change. Top big league closers such as Heath Bell (two minor league starts), Brian Wilson (three starts), Huston Street and David Aardsma (both college closers for national championship teams) had lots of practice coming out of the bullpen before they ever got to the big leagues. Our reliever rankings include some starters who seem likely to move, such as Erbe; some relievers who are getting innings as starters in the minors, such as Cashner and Lindblom; and some college closers in the Aardsma/Street mold, such as Storen, who helped Stanford to the 2008 College World Series trip.

Rk.	Player, Organization	Highest 2009 Level
1.	Drew Storen, Nationals	Double-A
2.	Phillippe Aumont, Phillies	Double-A
3.	Andrew Cashner, Cubs	High A
4.	Rex Brothers, Rockies	Low A
5.	Josh Lindblom, Dodgers	Triple-A
6.	Craig Kimbrel, Braves	Triple-A
7.	Brandon Erbe, Orioles	Double-A
8.	Daniel Schlereth, Tigers	Majors
9.	Carlos Gutierrez, Twins	Double-A
10.	Jacob McGee, Rays	High A



Drew Storen goes right to the top of our relievers list and should move quickly

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Tulsa welcomes change with a new ballpark

BY STEVE HUNT

Building a new stadium in Tulsa took plenty of patience, several stops and starts and lots of work. But in the end, all the delays and the waiting may have paid off.

It's hard to find anyone complaining in Tulsa as the Drillers get ready to open 8,000-seat ONEOK Field, a state-of-the-art facility that also helps the team get back into downtown Tulsa for the first time in 80 years.

The team's old home, Drillers Stadium located on the outskirts of town, still looked fine on the outside, but the park was starting to show its signs of age on the inside with plumbing and heating/cooling issues. So back in 1998, the team started looking to try to get back to downtown.

"We started getting approached about building a ballpark in downtown as far back as 1998," Drillers president Chuck Lamson said. "For various reasons, it didn't come to fruition, whether it was because of lack of funding or whatever. It was more of a discussion than a concrete plan."

Different ideas were floated, including the possibility of moving to the Tulsa suburb of Jenks.

"It looked like a very viable option," Lamson admitted. "It was something we considered

strongly. We signed a non-binding letter of intent to explore it further. The reason I did that was to recognize that we had still talked to the city first but this was a serious option. It wasn't ever intended to be a leverage move but it did get the city's attention and got them really moving toward something."

The possibility of the Drillers moving south quickly got the attention of current mayor Dewey Bartlett Jr.'s predecessor, Kathy Taylor, who served as Tulsa's mayor between 2006 and 2009. After learning about the Jenks option, Taylor went to work on bringing the team to downtown.

"That was one of her true driving forces," Lamson said. "One of the things she wanted to accomplish during her term was to get the Drillers to downtown Tulsa, not only for the benefit of downtown but to give us a new facility. The mayor got very active and it culminated in us signing an exclusive letter to negotiate in January 2008."

Learning From The Best

The team may have hoped to have a new stadium sooner, but by waiting it has had the chance to absorb lessons from around the country. Lamson traveled around the country to different stadiums such as Memphis' and Sacramento's to try to incorporate their best ideas into ONEOK Field.

"I think we've got a great facility," he said.



Baseball returns to downtown Tulsa when the Double-A Drillers unveil ONEOK Field on April 8

"The benefit of building near the end of this building boom in minor league baseball is that I've seen a lot of the good things that people have done. We were able to incorporate some of those ideas into our ballpark and hopefully keep it unique for Tulsa."

"It's a project the entire city has supported."

Among ONEOK's amenities are 23 luxury suites, a stadium club, a conference center, an underground batting cage between clubhouses and a 360-degree concourse that stretches around the stadium.

Fans can also sit in a left-field terrace section at picnic tables or general admission lawn seating areas located in left-center and right field.

Tulsa's ballpark comes at the end of the decade's building boom, which has seen 51 new ballparks open since 2000, but few on the horizon. The Texas League has unveiled seven ballparks in the past eight years—San Antonio's facility, built in 1994, is now the oldest.

"ONEOK Field will not only enhance the entertainment opportunities in downtown Tulsa, but provide development opportunities in our Greenwood, Brady and Blue Dome entertainment districts," Bartlett said.

In September 2008, the 18,000-seat BOK Center opened in downtown. For Bartlett, the opening of the new ballpark is just another step toward revitalizing the area.

"With the BOK Center, ONEOK Field and the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, we welcome everyone to downtown to share in this new entertainment experience," he said.

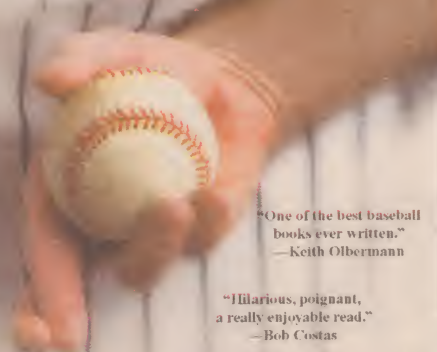
Texas League president Tom Kayser agrees.

"This park has a lot more meaning to the city of Tulsa or to the Texas League than just a ballpark," he said. "It is an anchor at one end of an entertainment area... I love the downtown setting. It has a great view not unlike Little Rock looking out at downtown."

Steve Hunt is a freelance writer based in Frisco, Texas, who grew up in Tulsa.

"BULL DURHAM MEETS BALL FOUR." —Rob Neyer, ESPN.com

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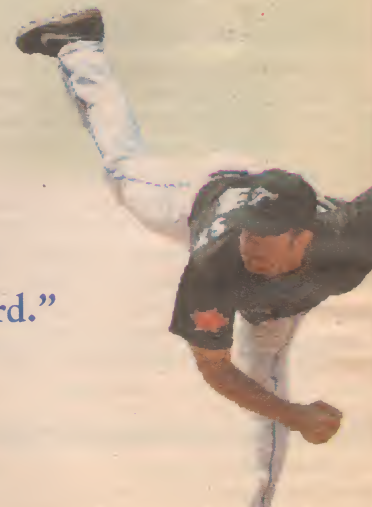
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Stars may be aligned for Cubs' Castro

CHICAGO | Cubs

BY JEFF VORVA



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: www.baseballamerica.com/today/teams

PEORIA, ARIZ. It was purely a coincidence that new Cubs owner **Tom Ricketts** and hot short-stop **Starlin Castro** arrived to spring training on the same day.

Both generated plenty of excitement for the team's future.

Cubs fans are hoping that the Ricketts era means a World Series championship is in the organization's future. And they are hoping Castro, who signed out of the Dominican Republic in 2006 and turned 20 on March 24, will be a key to that elusive prize.

Castro will have a lot to prove to convince fans who were disappointed with hyped

prospects **Corey Patterson** and **Felix Pie** in the past. But he lived up to the hype in manager **Lou Piniella's** eyes over the first weeks of spring training drills—this after hitting .299/.342/.392 between high Class A Daytona and Double-A Tennessee. The veteran manager started putting the Dominican star in good company when talking about his game.

"He's got good hands," Piniella said. "He can swing the bat. You know, he reminds me, just from first glance, a little bit of (**Edgar**) **Renteria** when he was younger. He uses his hands well to hit. He stroked the ball quite well."

Castro, using an interpreter, was trying to downplay the attention.

"I never asked anybody to compare me with (Renteria). I just like to play the game the right way."

Piniella said he didn't want to rush Castro, but later in camp said Castro could find his

way on the major league club if current short-stop **Ryan Theriot** was injured.

Meanwhile, fans in Chicago are already burning up sports talk radio lines suggesting the Cubs start Castro at short and move Theriot to second base. Castro will likely open the season at Triple-A Iowa, but Piniella won't be afraid to promote him quickly if need be. Piniella said Castro's demeanor and confidence makes it hard to believe the kid is just 20.

CUBBYHOLE

■ Another prospect, outfielder **Tyler Colvin**, had a homer and two doubles in the Cubs' Cactus League opener and hopes to land one of the final roster spots when camp breaks. Last year, he played in six major league games for the parent club in September.

■ The Cubs agreed to a deal with Cuban defector **Juan Yasser Serrano**, pending the pitcher passes a physical. The 21-year-old righthander throws in the 90 mph range and could start the season in Daytona or Tennessee.



Starlin Castro

BILL MITCHELL

ARIZONA | Diamondbacks

BY JACK MAGRUDER

In The Fast Layne

TUCSON, ARIZ. **Tom Layne** did not know he had a sinking fastball when he was drafted in 2007. Now it's his best pitch, and it is among the reasons the Diamondbacks invited him to major league spring training and plan to give him multiple looks as he continues a conversion from starter to the bullpen.

You could look it up. Layne, a lefthander, gave up one home run in 97 innings in a 2009 season spent between Double-A Mobile and high Class A Visalia, where he took up relieving almost full time. He also got about three groundouts for every fly out. **Brandon Webb**-esque effectiveness and a trait that would play particularly well in hitter-friendly Chase Field.

"Once you start understanding what you have, you can use it to your advantage a little more," Layne said early in spring training.

Former Diamondbacks pitcher **Erik Sabel** helped Layne with the sinker in his early development. Sabel's advice: Just trust it. Layne was 4-5, 3.53 in 35 appearances last season using a repertoire that also includes a cutter, a curveball and a changeup. He struck out 67 and gave up only 90 hits, but he walked 44.

"He's come a long way in his development," Arizona pitching coach **Mel Stottlemire Jr.** said. "He's a four-pitch guy and he's really learned how to pitch. He competes well and is a good athlete on the bump."

Layne, 25, was a 26th-round pick in 2007 out of Division II Mount Olive (N.C.). He uses his cutter to complement his sinker, and also picked up the changeup last season, forcing himself to use it in the Arizona Fall League and in the Puerto Rican League. The 6-foot-3, 185-pound Layne went 0-0, 4.85 in the AFL, but found the changeup was a positive addition.

"Instead of being a one- or two-pitch guy, I could be a three-pitch guy. If things weren't going well, I had something to fall back on," he said.

SNAKE BITES

■ Layne made his Cactus League debut against the Rockies but struggled through one inning of work in which he allowed four runs on five hits. All four runs came with two outs before Layne struck out **Miguel Olivo** to end the inning.

■ Outfielder **Cole Gillespie**, who hit .273/.372/.472 at three stops in 2009, hit a line-drive home run in the Diamondbacks' second exhibition game and threw out a runner attempting to score from second on a single in the third game.

ATLANTA | Braves

BY BILL BALLEW

On Their Way

KISSIMMEE, FLA. Having taken a pair of college pitchers with their first two picks last June for only the second time in draft history, the Braves were hoping to add some depth at the major league level in the not-too-distant future. That scenario remains on track given the early progress displayed by first-rounder **Mike Minor** and third-round selection **David Hale**.

Minor, a 22-year-old lefthander out of Vanderbilt who received a \$2.42 million signing bonus, pitched in four games last August at low Class A Rome before twirling in the Arizona Fall League. Displaying a solid four-pitch repertoire, Minor generates outstanding movement with his upper-80s fastball and throws one of the best changeups in the organization. He spent the early part of spring training with the major league club and looked capable of moving rapidly up the ladder.

"I still need to work on my breaking ball, which is a pitch I struggle with from time to time," Minor said. "I've developed a new grip on that pitch and got a later break on the ball."

Hale, 22, is a little bit more of a work in progress, simply because he was a two-way player at Princeton. Recruited as an infielder before spending much of his time in right field, Hale worked in 26 games on the mound with the Tigers, displaying fastballs that have been clocked as high as 96 mph. He also has a hard slider that sits in the mid-80s and is working on developing a better feel for his changeup.

Given his lack of experience as a pitcher, Hale believes he is developing rapidly simply because he is able to focus on just one aspect of the game.

"I have no doubt that focusing solely on pitching for the first time in my career is really helping me become a better player," Hale said. "For instance, when playing catch, I can work solely on my grips and keeping my mechanics in sync. Just having the mindset of a pitcher all of the time, I think, will enable me to make some big strides this year."

WIGWAM WISPS

■ Third baseman **Van Pope** is attempting to make the move to the mound during spring training. The 26-year-old Pope has been considered one of the organization's top defensive infielders but has struggled at the plate.

■ First baseman **Freddie Freeman** impressed the major league brass with his glove work as a non-roster invitee. Freeman also showed more power than in 2009, when he tried to play through a rib injury and a bruised hand.

BALTIMORE | Orioles

BY ROCH KUBATKO

Peacemaker

SARASOTA, FLA. When analyzing his delivery, young righthander **Brandon Erbe** decided it was time to end the violence.

Erbe spent the winter concentrating on refining his mechanics, often times working without a ball. And he made a fast impression on manager **Dave Trembley** during bullpen sessions leading to the first exhibition game.

"Boy, that was something," Trembley said. "He threw 35 pitches and he didn't throw two that were above the knees. Everything was down. He's really cleaned up his delivery a lot."

It didn't happen by accident.

"I've kind of been working on it for the past couple years, really, but this offseason was the first time I was really able to convert it to being on the mound and not have to think about it constantly," said Erbe, the 22-year-old graduate of McDonogh School in Baltimore who was 5-3, 2.34 with 62 strikeouts in 73 innings at Double-A Bowie last season.

"When I've done it in the past, I've been able to control it in the bullpen, but games is when the adrenaline starts taking over and I'd have trouble again. This past winter I spent a lot of time working on it getting to be muscle memory."

Erbe described his past delivery as "pretty violent," and blamed it on the health issues that have slowed his progression.

"I literally would jump both feet off the mound in some situations," he said. "I've been trying to limit that and stay smoother toward the plate, especially with the way my delivery was. It would cause a lot of injuries and everything. I'm trying to smooth it out."

Erbe didn't have much luck in his first outing, allowing three runs in one inning, but he'll have plenty of time to make up for it.

Erbe might be assigned to Bowie again, considering the logjam that figures to clog the Triple-A Norfolk rotation. He might have to wait for a promotion, but he certainly can force the issue—without using violence.

BIRD SEED

■ Infielder **Justin Turner** was sidelined briefly with a badly bruised left foot after being hit by a **Garrett Atkins** line drive during batting practice. X-rays were negative.

■ The Orioles summoned second baseman **Ryan Adams** from their minor league camp when they began running low on middle infielders. Besides losing Turner and **Brian Roberts** to a hemiated disk, they also had to scratch shortstop **Cesar Izturis** from the lineup because of a sore throat.

BOSTON | Red Sox

BY ALEX SPEIER

Getting Exposed

FORT MYERS, FLA. Perhaps more than any other position, catchers are expected to struggle offensively as they move up the minor league ranks. The demands of learning a new pitching staff are almost expected to come at the expense of hitting.

Thus it was somewhat eye-opening that **Luis Exposito**, 23, not only maintained his offensive performance after a mid-2009 promotion to Double-A Portland but actually improved it. He hit .271/.329/.424 with high Class A Salem before delivering a .337/.371/.489 line in a year-ending performance in Double-A Portland.

Farm director **Mike Hazen** suggested that Exposito may have the most raw power of any righthanded hitter in the system. His aggressiveness may hinder his ability to translate that skill into games, but that hasn't been the case over the last two seasons.

A draft-and-follow taken in the 31st round in 2005, Exposito was actually drafted on the strength of his defense. Though he is big for the position at 6-foot-4, 230 pounds, Sox officials say that his footwork allows him to move as well as smaller catchers.

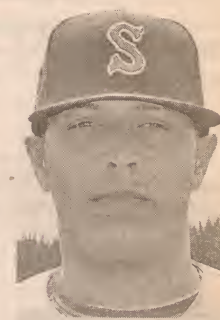
He has a strong arm, though he sometimes rushes throws, thus lowering his accuracy. Though the offensive numbers were what stood out in 2009, Exposito said that it was in the mental side of the game—especially his work with pitchers—that he made the most progress.

"I think it was mostly mental, adjusting to the increase of scouting there is in Double-A, how you have to work with the pitchers. They emphasize that part of the game, where you read swings and make adjustments (as a catcher)," Exposito said.

SOX YARNS

■ Outfielder **Zach Daeges** suffered a strained right lat in spring training that left him unable to play in any games in big league camp.

■ **Yamaico Navarro**, who has spent most of his minor league career playing shortstop, has been working out at both short and third base in spring training, and will likely see significant time at both positions in 2010.



Luis Exposito

RODGER WOOD

Valaika learns lessons from failure

CINCINNATI | Reds

BY JOHN FAY



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: www.baseballamerica.com/today/teams

GOODYEAR, ARIZ. Chris Valaika was one of the whiz kids in the Reds system.

He hit everywhere he went.

Until last year. That's when he learned a lesson he never thought he'd have to deal with.

"I learned how to fail," Valaika said.

Valaika, the 24-year-old infielder, hit .235/.271/.344 with six home runs in 266 at-bats at Triple-A last year.

Mind you, the season before Valaika combined to hit .319 with 18 home runs at high Class A Sarasota and Double-A Chattanooga. He won the Chief Bender award as the Reds' top minor leaguer that year.

His previous two years in the system were similar. Valaika, a third-round pick in 2006 out of UC-Santa Barbara, had won gold medals as a member of Team USA at the World University Games and the Pan-Am Games before the Reds drafted him.

"It was the first time I really struggled bad," he said. "It was about making adjustments. I was getting by on talent alone. I had to learn how to be a baseball player and understand what was happening. In a weird way, I think it helped me."

The frustration got the best of him. He broke his hand hitting a water cooler in frustration, costing him five weeks.

"I think everyone has those moments when it gets away from you," he said. "It gave me a chance to sit back and observe."

Valaika hit .161 before the injury and .260 after it, including a .318 clip in August.

"I think it was just a combination of things, guys being veterans in Triple-A, having an

idea of what they're doing," he said. "I'm sure it's even more so in the big leagues. If they find a hole, they're going to keep exposing it until you make adjustments. It's cat and mouse."

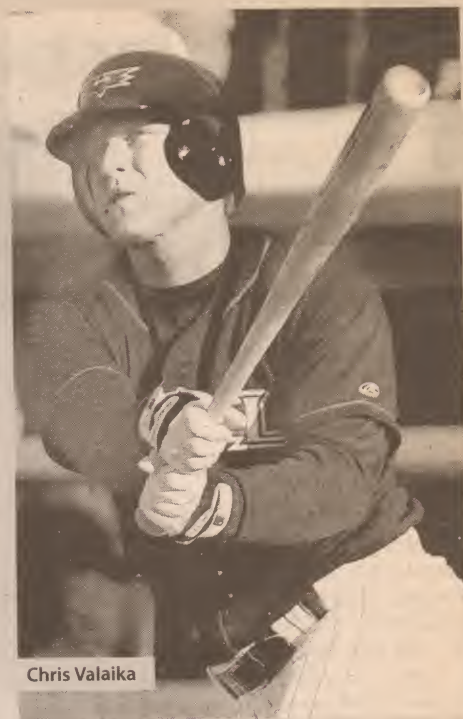
Despite his missed time and regular season struggles, Valaika did not play winter ball.

"I took the winter off and got to clear my head a little bit," Valaika said. "I'll go into the season, having an idea, a clue. Now, I think I can make adjustments and ride that wave and eventually get out of it."

RED HOTS

■ With **Joey Votto** going nowhere at first base, the Reds have decided to try **Yonder Alonso** at other positions—left field and third base. "I don't see Joey moving," general manager **Walt Jocketty** said. "We drafted Yonder for his bat. We're going to try to find a place for him."

■ Shortstop **Zack Cozart** has caught manager **Dusty Baker's** eye in his first big league camp. "I like his actions at shortstop," Baker said.



Chris Valaika

STAN DENNY

CHICAGO | White Sox

BY PHIL ROGERS

Potential On Hold

GLENDAL, ARIZ. On a cold, damp morning in early March, **Jared Mitchell** stepped in to face the Dodgers' **Scott Elbert**. He was the White Sox's leadoff man in a 'B' game, and despite the lefty-vs.-lefty matchup he pulled Elbert's pitch down the first-base line. The ball glanced off the first baseman's glove and kicked toward the stands, allowing Mitchell to easily reach second.

A little later in the inning, Mitchell broke for third on the front end of a double steal. His dive into the bag just beat a throw from **Brad Ausmus**. This was pretty impressive stuff from a kid who was at LSU a year ago.

Days later, however, Mitchell's season came to an end when he made a diving catch against the Angels, tearing a tendon in his left ankle that required surgery.

"You can see why he was a first-rounder," White Sox hitting coach **Greg Walker** said. "He is a very talented kid."

Mitchell, 21, has played just 34 games as a pro after being drafted 23rd overall last June, but he appeared to have been in the express lane on his way to Chicago. That's why the White Sox broke from their normal way of arranging lockers by uniform number to put Mitchell's No. 80 right in between **Juan Pierre's** No. 1 and **Paul Konerko's** No. 14 this spring.

Mitchell was all ears. He said the best part of his first spring training was "learning from all these guys, sitting around and listening to the older guys."

Mitchell didn't appear overmatched at the plate. The White Sox took a mostly hands-off approach with Mitchell in 2009 but Walker quickly spotted some mechanical flaws that need fixing, most notably one with his feet that leads to inconsistent balance. They were working hard to correct it.

When Mitchell returns, bat will determine how quickly manager **Ozzie Guillen** can call on his speed and outfield range, which has generated comparisons to **Carl Crawford** and a young **Johnny Damon**.

CHI-LITES

■ **C.J. Retherford** caught some bullpens early in camp but worked mostly as a second baseman. **Dayan Viedo** likewise tried first base early but gravitated back to third base.

■ Converted infielder **Sergio Santos** was off to a good start in his bid to win the final spot in the bullpen. He was always watched closely by scouts from other organizations.

CLEVELAND | Indians

BY STEPHANIE STORM

Professional Hitter

GOODYEAR, ARIZ. **Matt LaPorta's** best shot to make the Indians Opening Day roster didn't even make it one day into spring training.

Instead of giving the 25-year-old a chance to win the first-base job during spring training, the Indians instead signed **Russell Branyan** for a one-year, \$2 million contract, with manager **Manny Acta** announcing that Branyan would be the Indians' everyday first baseman.

LaPorta, acquired in the 2008 trade that sent **C.C. Sabathia** to the Brewers, was brought up from the minor leagues for the first time last year. He hit .254/.308/.442 in 181 at-bats with the Tribe after batting .299/.388/.530 in 338 at-bats for Triple-A Columbus.

During LaPorta's two major league stints, he primarily played left field while subbing in occasionally at right field, DH and first base.

But having shown a promising power stroke and then undergoing surgeries on his hip and toe in October, the new plan suddenly became transitioning LaPorta into an everyday first baseman.

That is, until the 34-year-old Branyan was brought back into the Tribe fold—for the fourth time.

"(LaPorta's) going to get 500 at-bats, if he's healthy," Acta said. "That's what's important here."

But what Acta said is just as important as what he didn't say, which is where LaPorta would get those at-bats.

Now, unless LaPorta beats out another up-and-comer in outfielder **Michael Brantley** for the Indians left-field job, those 500 at-bats could come at Triple-A Columbus.

But if it were up to LaPorta, what does he consider his best fit in the field?

"It's funny, I haven't known my whole life," said LaPorta, when asked if he was an outfielder or an infielder. "In college, guys would ask me where I played, I'd just say, 'I'm a hitter.'"

SMOKE SIGNALS

■ The Brewers worked out a deal with the Indians to keep Rule 5 pick **Chuck Lofgren**, allowing the Brewers to send the lefthander to Triple-A. The Indians received righthanded reliever **Omar Aguilar** in return.

■ The Indians re-signed righthander **Tom Mastny** to a minor league contract. Mastny, 29, pitched for the Yokohama Bay Stars in the Japanese Central League last season, going 1-5, 5.69 in 15 games. The Indians sold his contract to Yokohama in the winter following the 2008 season.

COLORADO | Rockies

BY JACK ETKIN

Living Large

TUCSON, ARIZ. In his first big league camp, lefthanded reliever **Matt Reynolds** was the last of 12 pitchers to work in a Rockies intrasquad game. Reynolds made the most of it, retiring three batters on nine pitches and drawing praise from manager **Jim Tracy**.

"That's a neat arm," Tracy said of Reynolds, who is 6-foot-5. "That's a big man and back when we were having our meetings, people told me about his deception. I can see where the deception comes from because it's a big man with a very quick arm and a very tight, sharp breaking ball that out of the hand will buckle that lefthanded hitter just enough to where if he does swing, I know it won't be as good a swing as he wanted to get off."

Reynolds, 25, split last season between high Class A Modesto and Double-A Tulsa, posting a 2.29 ERA with 17 walks and 87 strikeouts in 75 innings.

Reynolds has shown command to both sides of the plate in his three professional seasons, averaging two walks and nine strikeouts per nine innings with a fastball, slider, changeup and an extremely effective split-finger pitch.

Reynolds has benefited from watching big leaguers early in spring training, singling out how **Aaron Cook** threw batting practice.

"It was pretty neat to watch how pretty much everything he threw was like right where he wanted, bottom of the zone," Reynolds said. "You really start to understand consistency when you watch guys who have been getting it done in the big leagues. You can see their consistency, and you realize that's the point that you want to get to."

ROCKY ROADS

■ While throwing batting practice, star-crossed righthander **Greg Reynolds** was hit above the right elbow by a line drive that chipped a bone. But because the bone chip is not in the elbow joint, Reynolds does not need surgery and will be able to pitch when the significant soreness subsides.

■ Seeking Triple-A depth, the Rockies signed lefthander **Josh Muecke**, 27, first baseman **Brad Eldred**, 29 and third baseman **Travis Metcalf**, 27.



Matt Reynolds

BILL MITCHELL

DETROIT | Tigers

BY JOHN WAGNER

Notable Absence

LAKELAND, FLA. The curious career of Tigers righthander **Brandon Hamilton** has taken an unexpected turn.

Hamilton, a supplemental first-round pick in 2007, did not report to spring training.

Instead Hamilton has chosen to take a mission trip, and Tigers officials hope he will return to extended spring training once that trip is completed.

It's just the latest, and strangest, twist in a career that hasn't gone exactly as planned for Hamilton, who signed for \$540,000 after being drafted out of Millbrook (Ala.) High.

Hamilton, 21, began his career with short-season Oneonta in 2007 and flashed a fastball that touched the mid-90s and sat comfortably in the low-90s. He also displayed a power curve that drew favorable comparisons to the breaking ball of the Tigers' first-round pick that year, **Rick Porcello**.

But Hamilton, who ranked as the Tigers' 10th-best prospect entering 2008, struggled that year. After beginning the year in extended spring, Hamilton went 0-5, 5.01 in eight appearances with low Class A West Michigan, walking 28 in 32 innings.

A demotion to the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League allowed him to settle down, and Hamilton went 5-1, 1.86 and 42 strikeouts in 39 innings there.

But things got worse, not better, with West Michigan last season. Hamilton began the season in the 'Whitecaps' rotation and struggled, posting a 6.39 ERA in 20 starts, walking 50 in 87 innings.

Things continued to spiral when he moved to the bullpen in August. In 10 relief appearances Hamilton had a 12.34 ERA, issuing 11 walks in 12 innings. Suddenly, things like Hamilton's delivery, which has a lot of moving parts, have become an issue, as has his wildness in his two Midwest League stints.

The Tigers are expected to be patient with Hamilton. While he has struggled with fastball command, he still controls his curve well and has gained confidence in a changeup.

TIGER TALES

■ The signing of **Johnny Damon** may give Triple-A Toledo a number of outfield prospects to start the season. Damon's addition may push prospects such as **Ryan Strieby**, **Casper Wells**, and **Wilkin Ramirez** to the Mud Hens.

■ The Tigers released third baseman **Michael Hollimon**, who hit .212/.320/.385 in 29 Double-A games last year.

At long last, Miller time approaches

FLORIDA | Marlins

BY JUAN RODRIGUEZ



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: www.baseballamerica.com/today/teams

JUPITER, FLA. At age 25 and entering his eighth professional season, **Jai Miller's** prospect days are over. He's now into the late bloomer stage of a career that went nowhere for four years, but since 2007 has started to show promise.

A three-sport star out of Selma, Ala., Miller turned down a scholarship to play wide receiver and point guard at Stanford to sign out of the 2003 draft. Until recently, taking the Marlins' \$250,000 signing bonus as a fourth-round pick looked like a poor decision.

Miller has shown enough growth in the upper levels of the minors, however, to merit his 40-man roster spot. Over his first four pro

seasons Miller hit .207 with a 35.7 percent strikeout rate. The last three years he's turned himself in to a .271 hitter and lowered his strikeout rate by almost 5 percentage points.

At Triple-A New Orleans in 2009, Miller's batting average and OPS rose by 22 and 49 points, respectively, over his 2008 numbers. Though he had 91 fewer at-bats last season because of an oblique strain, he had just four fewer extra-base hits than the previous year.

"What we're watching here is a five-tool player," said **Edwin Rodriguez**, Miller's manager at New Orleans. "He's got everything. He needs to work on learning the strike zone, staying away from the breaking ball in the dirt, but he's making good strides. Another plus is he drives the ball to the opposite field. The big thing on Jai is just learning the strike zone. Other than that it's going out there and letting the ability take over."

Raw ability is all Miller had when he was drafted. Baseball was something to keep him

busy when football and basketball weren't in season, and initially it showed. As much as learning when to keep the bat on his shoulder, Miller needed to learn the game.

"As I've gotten a little older, knowing my swing and being able to make adjustments on the fly has really helped me," Miller said. "Physically, there's nothing different. The only difference now is . . . where I am in the box mentally. Physically it's not like I could do something today I couldn't do a couple of years ago. I just had to soak up more and more information. You learn more and get better."

FISH BITES

■ Righthander **Ryan Tucker** revealed he has Reynaud's syndrome, a numbness and discoloration of the extremities occurring when small arteries that circulate blood to the fingers and toes are exposed to cold and constrict.

■ **Brandon Hyde**, the Double-A Jacksonville manager in 2009, will be the minor league infield coordinator this season.



Jai Miller

JOHN WILLIAMSON

HOUSTON | Astros

BY ZACHARY LEVINE

Don't Call It A Comeback

KISSIMMEE, FLA. While 2010 could represent a fresh start for righthander **Tanner Bushue**, the Astros believe he doesn't need one.

"He's exactly where we thought he would be at this stage of his development," assistant general manager **Ricky Bennett** said.

Bushue, a second-round pick out of an Illinois high school in 2009, sustained a back injury last July that forced the Astros to shut him down, so he missed most of the season.

Bushue was limited to five starts in his professional debut in the Rookie-level Gulf Coast League. He went 1-0, 2.42 with 19 strikeouts and five walks in 22 innings.

He's one of the 37 Astros prospects who was called to Kissimmee, Fla., early for a one-week minor league minicamp this year. Astros officials think the back problems that ended his 2009 were a one-time injury, and will not be a chronic condition.

"He wasn't used to doing a lot of the work that we had him doing," Bennett said. "It won't really change our thought process as far as his first full season."

Bushue is penciled in to start 2010 in the rotation at low Class A Lexington after his first spring training, but nothing is set in stone.

Wherever he goes, he'll bring a low 90s fastball, a changeup and a curveball that serves as his signature pitch. Coming from a 6-foot-4, 180-pound frame, the pitch has close to 12-to-6 movement.

"He's got a pretty good feel for it for a young pitcher," Bennett said.

Bushue's feel is especially advanced considering he never concentrated solely on baseball before. A former standout basketball player in high school, Bushue is just scratching the surface of his potential on the diamond.

SPACE SHOTS

■ Two Astros prospects were slowed by injuries in the early stages of spring training. Shortstop **Jiovanni Mier** had shoulder soreness and backed off his training regimen. Outfielder **Jon Gaston** was also pulled out of workouts with a toe injury. Neither injury was considered serious.

■ **Koby Clemens**, who still faces uncertainty about his position, played first base for what was unofficially the first time in an intrasquad game. Clemens, who played third base in his first three professional seasons and caught the next two, will get time in the outfield and at first base, the latter being a position where the Astros do not have much depth. Clemens went 3-for-4 with a home run and three RBIs after coming over from minor league camp for the game.

KANSAS CITY | Royals

BY ALAN ESKEW

Royals On The Lamb

SURPRISE, ARIZ. Heading out of the 2007 high school season, lefthander **John Lamb** looked like a possible first-round pick. That changed in February 2008, when Lamb was in a car accident.

"It was less than a week before our first game," he said. "I left lunch to go eat with some friends. On my way back, I got rear-ended at a red light. I really didn't think much of it. I smacked up against the window and jammed my arm."

"I went out to baseball practice. As I started throwing it just didn't feel right. It got worse and worse through the night. I told my dad about it and the next day we went to an urgent care and took an X-ray."

Lamb had a hairline fracture on his throwing elbow and was put in a cast for six weeks, after going 9-2, 1.48 and hitting .396 as a junior at Laguna Hills (Calif.) High and being named his conference player and pitcher of the year. Lamb missed his senior season and dropped off many scouts' radar screens, but the Royals stayed on him, selected him in the fifth round of the 2008 draft and signed him for \$165,000.

"Our scouting staff did a good job of following him after the injury," assistant general manager **J.J. Picollo** said. "He's got a tremendous upside . . . He has a very clean arm, easy delivery, easy arm action. He throws a lot of strikes with his fastball. He has an outstanding changeup and an above-average curveball that he throws for strikes. He's just an advanced pitcher for his age."

The Royals didn't send Lamb into game action in 2008, and instead had him rehab that summer. He began 2009 at Rookie-level Burlington, going 2-2, 3.95 with 25 strikeouts and nine walks in 27 innings. He earned a promotion to Rookie-level Idaho Falls, where in three August starts he allowed one run in 19 innings, striking out 22 and walking three.

Lamb, now 19 and 6-foot-3, 195 pounds, has an 88-91 mph fastball that has touched 94, as well as a changeup and curveball.

ROYALTIES

■ The Royals claimed righty **Gaby Hernandez** off waivers from the Red Sox. Hernandez went 10-9, 5.23 in 26 starts last season with Triple-A Tacoma in the Mariners system.

■ Righthander **Henry Barerra**, who had Tommy John surgery last June, was placed on the 60-day disabled list.

LOS ANGELES | Angels

BY BILL SHAIKIN

On The Radar

TEMPE, ARIZ. **Michael Kohn** was minding his business, playing all over the diamond as a senior at the College of Charleston, swinging with some pop, hoping for a shot at a professional career as a catcher.

"I ended up getting on the mound one day after practice, as a joke," Kohn said. "I hit 95, 96 mph on the radar gun."

That was no joke. Kohn hit the pro radar in a hurry. After a college pitching career that consisted of 13 innings, and after he had not been drafted as a position player after his junior year, Kohn got picked by the Angels in the 13th round of the 2008 draft.

The righthander has rocketed up the Angels' depth chart. He pitched at Rookie-level Orem in 2008 and at Class A stops at Cedar Rapids and Rancho Cucamonga in 2009, posting these career numbers: 8-1, 1.72, with 37 walks and 147 strikeouts in 89 innings.

Kohn, 23, gives the credit to the Angels coaches who helped transform him from a guy that "basically just reared back and fired" to a pitcher: **Mike Butcher**, **Brandon Emanuel**, **Kernan Ronan** and **Zeke Zimmerman**.

The Angels project him as a power reliever, and the 6-foot, 200-pound Kohn said no one has suggested trying him as a starter.

"I go 110 percent on every pitch," he said. "I'd probably blow out by the third inning."

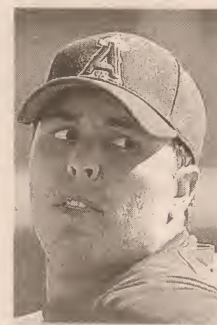
He still misses hitting, but he takes his swings now by teaching hitting to children during the winter.

"Other than that," he said, "hitting a golf ball is about all the hitting I do."

ANGEL FOOD

■ **Chris Pettit**, 25, who would have competed for a reserve big league outfielder job in spring training, will miss the season after surgery to repair a torn labrum in his right shoulder. Pettit, who had tried to rehabilitate the winter ball injury, hit .321/.383/.482 at Triple-A Salt Lake last season.

■ Outfielder **Terry Evans**, 28, who is trying to make his first Opening Day roster, did not strike out in his first 12 Cactus League at-bats. Evans has six strikeouts in 18 career major league at-bats.



Michael Kohn

BILL MITCHELL

LOS ANGELES | Dodgers

BY DOUG PADILLA

Comfort Zone

GLENDALE, ARIZ. One year after he was the Dodgers' darling of spring training, **Josh Lindblom** is settling into a comfort zone.

The imposing 6-foot-5, 240-pound righthander has every intention of creating the same type of buzz he did last March, when he was a late addition to big league camp, but this year he's just trying to take a low-key approach.

"I'm still young and I realize that last year there were a lot of things I needed to learn and there still are a lot of things I need to learn," said Lindblom, before going out and throwing two quick scoreless innings in a B game against the White Sox. "I don't really see not making it as a failure, but if I go out and don't learn anything, that would be a failure to me."

A year ago, though, he wasn't so open-minded when his breakthrough spring still led to a season-opening assignment at Double-A Chattanooga. He admitted to watching Dodgers games or peeking at box scores and wondering why he wasn't with the big club.

He wasn't exactly spinning his spring experience into regular-season gold, but after a 3-5, 4.71 performance in 14 appearances (11 starts) at Chattanooga, he was promoted to Triple-A Albuquerque. Pitching mostly out of relief in Triple-A, he went 3-0, 2.54 in 20 appearances.

"He was definitely an option if he was needed for us (in the major leagues)," assistant general manager **De Jon Watson** said. "We'll keep developing him. We'll have to see how major league spring training shakes out for him this year and how the club shakes out. But he's an interesting young man with a good arm."

Already this spring, Lindblom had the opportunity of a lifetime when he received one-on-one instruction from Hall of Famer **Sandy Koufax**. It was just one more chance to become a better-educated pitcher.

"Whether I throw bad or whether I throw well, I will learn something every time out," Lindblom said. "That's really what spring's all about, learning yourself so you're prepared."

L.A. CONFIDENTIAL

■ Outfielder **Trayvon Robinson** earned rave reviews from manager **Joe Torre** after the first B game of the spring. Robinson was one of 33 Dodgers that traveled to Taiwan for three spring exhibitions against Taiwanese all-star teams.

■ Torre was impressed with righthander **Jon Link**, whom the Dodgers got from the White Sox in the **Juan Pierre** trade, after seeing him in his first spring outing. "Link was very aggressive," Torre said. "He didn't hurt (his chances)."

The set-up: Braddock shines in relief

MILWAUKEE | Brewers

BY TOM HAUDRICOURT



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: www.baseballamerica.com/today/teams

MARYVALE, ARIZ. It didn't take long for lefthander **Zach Braddock** to make an impression in his first big league spring training.

Before exhibition play even began, Brewers manager **Ken Macha** said Braddock already had caught his eye.

"Braddock has been real impressive," Macha said. "He is overpowering. His stuff is not going to keep him out of the big leagues. It's a matter of putting it where he wants to."

"This is a guy who could contribute before the year is over."

Because Braddock, 22, had injury problems early in his pro career, the Brewers last year

converted him from starter to reliever.

Braddock thrived in that role, spreading 40 innings over 26 appearances and going 3-2, 1.79 with 62 strikeouts and seven walks—an incredible ratio of nearly 9-to-1. He finished the season with Double-A Huntsville.

"It was different, just in game preparation," said Braddock, an 18th-round pick in 2005 who signed the following year out of Burlington (N.J.) CC as a draft-and-follow. "I thought I made the adjustments pretty well."

"They put me in a position to be successful. It obviously worked out and I'm thankful for that. I definitely feel good about it. Once you make a decision and make an effort to stick to an idea and a game plan, it's nice to see some production from it."

Though the Brewers had good intentions in switching Braddock's roles, some wondered if relieving might lessen his impact once he gets to the majors.

"The impact of guys who can come in and

dominate can be great," said Macha, who indicated that Braddock profiles more as a set-up reliever now because his hard stuff is ahead of his offspeed stuff.

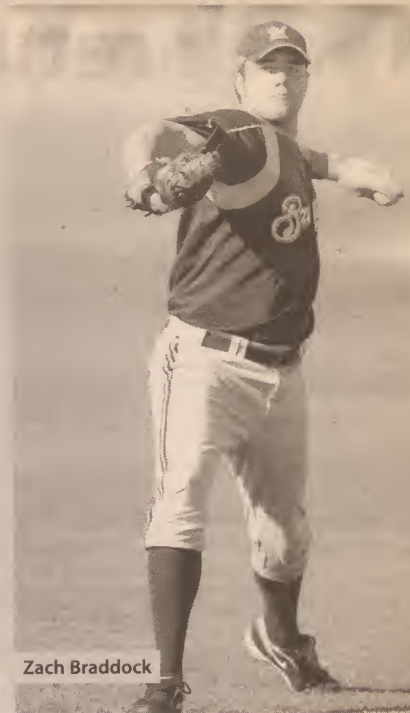
"Does this kid have that going for him right now? We'll see. I'm not sure. But could he at one point, with his stuff? Yeah."

When informed that Macha mentioned his name unsolicited, Braddock smiled and said, "It's even more motivation to stay with what I've been doing and keep working as hard as I've been working. It is validating."

MICROBREWS

■ Outfielder **Logan Schafer**, the organization's reigning minor league player of the year, suffered a slight groin strain during workouts in the minor league winter program and did not report as scheduled to camp as a non-roster invitee.

■ Righthander **Josh Butler** was set back at the outset of big league camp with arm stiffness. Butler started his offseason program later than usual after a long 2009 season, which included an assignment to the Arizona Fall League.



Zach Braddock

BILL MITCHELL

MINNESOTA | Twins

BY PHIL MILLER

Here's The Catch

FORT MYERS, FLA. **Chris Herrmann** was a star second baseman in high school, a starting third baseman at Miami and a left fielder with Rookie-level Elizabethton shortly after being drafted last June. And after watching Herrmann play all those positions for all those years, the Twins are now convinced:

He's a catcher.

"Actually, we always projected him as a catcher. We worked him out back there before we drafted him," vice president for player personnel **Mike Radcliff** said. "We would have switched him last year, but you don't want to throw too much at a guy too soon."

So they put him in left field, where Herrmann racked up 70 hits and 33 walks in just 59 games while getting comfortable with professional baseball. Now they want him to challenge himself at a new position, one he occasionally manned at Alvin (Texas) CC.

The Twins have had success moving infielders behind the plate; former second baseman **Jose Morales** is expected to be **Joe Mauer's** backup in Minnesota this season. And Herrmann, 22, who was drafted in the sixth round in 2009, has the footwork and the hands necessary for the job, the Twins believe. "If he's going to be a major leaguer," Radcliff predicted, "it'll be as a catcher."

"There's still a question about whether his arm will hold up," Radcliff said. "He grades out as an average arm for a catcher, but we don't know about the rigors of playing every day."

If he can handle the job—Herrmann likely will begin with low Class A Beloit—the Twins have no doubt that he will hit. A lefthanded batter, Herrmann doesn't hit for much power, but his .391 on-base percentage last year has Minnesota excited about his future.

"Lefthanded catchers, those guys have real value," Radcliff said. "We're always looking for catchers who can hit. Everybody is."

TWIN KILLINGS

■ Righthander **Loek Van Mil's** first big league camp was spoiled when he experienced soreness in his pitching shoulder just days after arriving in Florida. The Twins held him out of drills for two weeks, but when he took the mound again, he threw just one pitch before the pain returned.

■ Cuban righthander **Yoslan Herrera**, who received a \$1.9 million contract from the Pirates upon defecting in 2007, signed a minor league deal with the Twins. Herrera, 28, went 11-1, 3.23 with Double-A Altoona last year, but he ran up a 9.82 ERA in five big league starts.

NEW YORK | Mets

BY ADAM RUBIN

Jenrry Thé Eighth?

PORT ST. LUCIE, FLA. Mets manager **Jerry Manuel** attended the first week of the Arizona Fall League, trying to gauge if righthander **Jenrry Mejia** is ready to contribute at the big league level in 2010.

Manuel left that viewing believing Mejia needed to dramatically improve his control before meriting serious consideration for an Opening Day bullpen role.

Then Mejia arrived at camp, started firing strikes and Manuel started comparing the cutting action on Mejia's fastball to **Mariano Rivera's** movement.

General manager **Omar Minaya** indicated the plan early in camp was for the 20-year-old righthander to open the season in Double-A Binghamton's rotation, but Manuel may lobby otherwise.

"I like him a lot. For me, when you are that dominant, you hope as you progress that you continue to see that consistency," Manuel said. "What he has to do is prove he can throw consistent strikes. If he can do that, you've got somebody fighting for him."

Mejia's control last year wavered upon a promotion to Binghamton, where he walked 23 in 44 innings—but on the season, he fanned 91 in 95 innings, allowing just two home runs.

In the AFL, he walked 13 batters in 14½ innings and had a 12.56 ERA. He doesn't grip his signature pitch like a cutter. Instead, he holds it like a four-seam fastball and relies on the natural movement.

"He had a really good cut fastball. It was effective," said Marlins outfielder **Cameron Maybin**, one of Mejia's spring strikeout victims. "As far as I went, everything was away from me, so it was tough."

METAMORPHOSES

■ The Mets intend to play **Fernando Martinez** primarily in right field at Triple-A Buffalo this season.

■ The Mets signed lefthander **Mike O'Connor** to a minor league deal. He pitched for the Triple-A affiliates of the Nationals, Padres and Royals last season, going a combined 3-10, 5.56 with 64 strikeouts and 25 walks in 91 innings.



Jenrry Mejia

NEW YORK | Yankees

BY GEORGE KING

Tuning In To Taiwan

TAMPA The Yankees signed 18-year-old Taiwanese third baseman **Fu-Lin Kuo** in January for \$150,000. At least, that's what initial reports indicated. The actual sum was \$300,000.

Kuo has impressed the Yankees' evaluators so much that they believe it will be money well spent.

"There is a lot to like," international scouting director **Donny Rowland** said. "The last time I saw him was in high school last year. We like his stroke, his plate action and his plate personality. He squares up balls and has plenty of arm."

"Don't get me wrong. He isn't a superstar, but we like the entire package."

In the wake of **Kei Igawa** turning into a \$20 million bust, the Yankees haven't signed a marquee free agent from Japan. They were heavily involved in the Dominican Republic and followed Cuban shortstop **Adeinis Hechavarria** from Cuba to Mexico and had worked him out quite a few times before Hechavarria signed with the Blue Jays.

Does the signing signal a new direction for the Yankees in Taiwan, where they signed **Chien-Ming Wang** a decade ago?

"We will be active in it if the talent of the player matches what is a good market," Rowland said.

Rowland, who is in his second stint with the Yankees, credits scout **Ken Su** with the signing of Kuo, a righthanded batter.

"(Su) knows what is going on in Taiwan," Rowland said. "We will be as active as we should be in lining up our international talent."

According to farm director **Mark Newman**, Kuo looks advanced for a youngster.

"His actions are good and he has good plate discipline," Newman said. "The ball gets off his bat well. He has a chance to be a good hitter, and defensively he is really solid."

In the early days of minor league camp, the 6-foot-1, 175-pound Kuo hit balls to all fields and had shown some power.

YANKEE DOODLES

■ Top catching prospect **Jesus Montero** dropped nearly 15 pounds in the first three weeks of camp due to a new workout program.

■ The Yankees signed first baseman **Myron Leslie**, who batted .272/.410/.494 with 18 homers in 92 games last season with New Jersey of the independent Can-Am League. He made it to Double-A as a member of the Athletics organization in 2008.

OAKLAND | Athletics

BY CASEY TEFERTILLER

Rockin' Krol

PHOENIX For lefthander **Ian Krol**, walking into the Athletics complex for instructional league was the ultimate adventure.

An 18-year-old just out of high school in Naperville, Ill., this was the beginning of a new career, a new life. He responded by being one of the most impressive performers in camp.

"He has great ability and a great makeup to attack hitters," farm director **Keith Lieppman** said. "He has an air of confidence about him."

In a fine display of control last fall, he allowed only one walk in his 16 innings. "My command was spot on. It was getting better," Krol said. "I like to paint the corner. I'm kind of a crafty little guy."

Last June, many clubs considered Krol to be a risky pick when the A's took him in the seventh round. For one thing, he had a firm commitment to Arizona. For another, he had been suspended from his high school team for a violation of the athletic code of conduct and had not pitched during his senior year.

"The negotiation lasted much of the summer before Krol made the decision. 'It was tough,' Krol said. 'It came down to that last day. I didn't know if I was going to college or going to Oakland."

"But you can't really turn down that much money. It came to the last second, and the money swayed my decision."

He signed for \$925,000, a whopping bonus by A's standards. And Krol put it in the bank to assure his future as he prepared for his present.

At the end of instructional league, the 6-foot-1 Krol met with conditioning coach **Judd Hawkins** and put together a workout program he believes has helped add significant strength to his body. He said he weighs in at 193 pounds now, up a dozen from draft day.

Krol relies on his fastball in the low 90s, plus a workable curve that the A's expect will improve with experience. He also is learning the rudiments of a circle change. "I changed my grip on it, and once I found the grip it really started coming together," he said.

A'S ACORNS

■ Outfielder **Michael Taylor**, an offseason acquisition, made a big impression during the early days of big league camp, lashing line drives to all fields.

■ After missing most of 2009 while recovering from Tommy John surgery, hard-throwing righthander **Fautino de los Santos** hit 92 mph in the first days of camp.

Monell returns to familiar ground

SAN FRANCISCO | Giants

BY ANDY BAGGARLY



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: www.baseballamerica.com/today/teams

SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ. When catcher **Johnny Monell** walked into his first big league camp this spring, the Brooklyn native acted like he'd been there before. That's because he had.

Monell, 24, grew up in baseball clubhouses around the world, from Taiwan to Mexico to Puerto Rico to leagues all over the U.S. His father **Johnny Sr.** played 17 professional seasons, spending time with three organizations while also playing independent ball.

Monell Sr. didn't reach the big leagues, but he played with plenty of big leaguers. Johnny Jr. has pictures with his dad's winter ball teammates in Puerto Rico—guys like **Carlos**

Delgado and **Jim Thome**.

Three of Monell's instructors this spring—roving infield coach **Jose Alguacil**, roving baserunning coach **Henry Cotto** and big league hitting coach **Hensley Meulens**—had played with his father at one time or another.

Nepotism isn't the reason the Giants invited Monell to big league camp, though. He polished his catching skills last year, and with legitimate power from the left side, he's made himself into a prospect.

Monell, a 30th-round pick out of Seminole (Fla.) CC in 2007, credits two former catchers for his development. The first was **Hector Villanueva**, a one-time backstop with the Cubs, who first put the gear on him when he was 12 years old. Villanueva and his father are longtime friends and played together for independent Atlantic City.

"I was shagging in the outfield and he threw his bag at me," Monell said. "He said, 'You look good with the gear on. You should keep

at it.' Ever since then I wanted to catch."

The second influence was former Twins catcher **Brian Harper**, now the Giants' manager at high Class A San Jose, who made Monell believe he could receive.

"He sat me down one day and said, 'You can be something special. You've just gotta work at it,'" Monell said. "My receiving skills were suspect. I can say that honestly. Last spring training I stayed in extended (spring) and did early work every day."

GIANTICS

■ Randy Johnson might have retired, but the Giants still have a 6-foot-10 lefthander in the system. They signed former Royals reliever **Andy Sisco** to a minor league deal. He missed last season while recovering from Tommy John surgery.

■ Infielder **Emmanuel Burriss** sustained another break in the fifth metatarsal in his left foot during the club's Cactus League opener. The club hoped a rehab schedule that included injections of a bone strengthening drug would allow Burriss to return in four weeks and avoid another surgery.



Johnny Monell

BILL MITCHELL

PHILADELPHIA | Phillies

BY JIM SALISBURY

Another Role Reversal

CLEARWATER, FLA. The Phillies are giving **Philippe Aumont** a makeover. They have changed his role, his mechanics and even his repertoire of pitches.

Aumont was the centerpiece of the deal that sent **Cliff Lee** to Seattle in December. The 6-foot-7 righthander was a first-round pick (11th overall) by the Mariners in 2007. In an effort to speed his route to the majors, the Mariners moved Aumont to closer last season.

Phillies officials had scouted Aumont extensively before the 2007 draft and liked him as a starter—though they acknowledge that the power-armed French Canadian could one day close, they believe he can be an effective starter and will use him in that role at Double-A Reading. At the very least, increasing his innings should help his development.

In addition to changing Aumont's role, the Phillies are adjusting his hip turn and trying to get him to pitch out of the three-quarters arm slot they saw before the draft. The team believes that arm slot is more conducive to getting movement on pitches. The club is also encouraging Aumont to throw more two-seam fastballs. As a closer last year, Aumont came over the top and featured a riding four-seamer.

Phillies officials showed Aumont some of his pre-draft videos to illustrate what they'd like to see. Aumont is on board with the changes.

"I'm trying to go back to the power sinker and get some ground balls," Aumont, 22, said. "Put the ball over the plate and let it work. I didn't throw sinkers as a reliever."

Early in camp, Aumont admitted feeling some pressure because he was traded for Lee. Team officials subsequently spoke with him, told him to relax and have fun.

"He doesn't have to worry about justifying the trade," big league pitching coach **Rich Dubee** said. "We got him because he's talented. He doesn't need to be concerned with the trade. He just needs to go pitch. He's a work in progress. We're making some adjustments, but that's often what player development is—trial and error."

PHIL-UPS

■ Righthander **David Herndon**, who the Phillies picked up in the Rule 5 draft, didn't allow a run in his first three innings in Grapefruit League play. Club officials were very impressed with the movement on Herndon's sinker.

■ Top prospect **Domonic Brown** hit .333/.375/.429 in 21 at-bats with four RBIs in his first 10 Grapefruit League games.

PITTSBURGH | Pirates

BY DEJAN KOVACEVIC

Talented Trio

BRADENTON, FLA. The Pirates have all three of their top prospects—third baseman **Pedro Alvarez**, outfielder **Jose Tabata** and righthander **Brad Lincoln**—in major league camp for spring training, and all are expected to arrive in Pittsburgh at some point in 2010.

Just not at the outset.

General manager **Neal Huntington** has stated throughout the offseason that all three "are not being ruled out, by any means" from making the Opening Day roster, but he has been just as clear that all three could "benefit from more seasoning" with Triple-A Indianapolis. None has played a full year in Triple-A.

Should any of the three—notably Alvarez, the Pirates' most highly touted prospect in years—fare well in Grapefruit League play, a demotion is sure to be unpopular in Pittsburgh, where the public's patience is low after 17 losing seasons. But by keeping any of the three down in the minors in 2010, even for a short time, the Pirates can delay the players' free agency (and perhaps arbitration) clocks by a full year.

If Alvarez, Tabata and Lincoln are going to fuss over that, it has not been evident with their offseasons: Alvarez and Tabata reported to spring training leaner and stronger, and Lincoln reinforced the superb conditioning program he began two years ago.

All three also have taken the non-controversial stance that they aim to reach Pittsburgh as soon as possible, even if it means forcing management to make a tough call this spring.

PITTBURGERS

■ Shortstop **Jarek Cunningham**, who missed all of 2009 to reconstructive knee surgery, will be assigned to high Class A Bradenton to open the season. An 18th-round pick out of high school in 2008, he batted .318/.385/.507 in a 43-game Rookie-ball debut that same year.

■ Righthander **Tim Alderson**, the prospect acquired from the Giants in the **Freddy Sanchez** trade, asked the Pirates to restore his delivery to the way it was when the Giants drafted him 22nd overall in 2007. He felt the change cost him 3-4 mph on his fastball.



Pedro Alvarez

ST LOUIS | Cardinals

BY DERRICK GOOLD

Well-Traveled Reliever

JUPITER, FLA. Before he showed proficiency for the role, righthander **Pete Parise** believes he got a crack at closing for Triple-A Memphis because of his most basic attribute: He was available.

"I didn't expect it," Parise said. "I think it was just I had enough rest before that day, and (manager **Chris Maloney**) just happened to throw me into that role. It was up for grabs really. I just got lucky."

Parise, 25, went 2-1, 4.17 with eight saves and 15 games finished after his promotion to Memphis. It was in the Redbirds' six-game postseason run to the Pacific Coast League title that he asserted himself as a reliever to watch.

In five appearances, Parise pitched five scoreless innings, allowed one hit, did not surrender a walk and went 4-for-4 in save opportunities. Opponents hit .063 against the righty the Cardinals signed out of the independent Frontier League in 2007.

Coaches and team officials were struck by the well-heeled poise of Parise, who was closing games for low Class A Quad Cities 12 months before. It comes from a well-traveled career.

By the end of the 2010 season, Parise will have been pitching, nearly uninterrupted, for 32 months. When he reported to his first major league spring training, Parise was only one week removed from facing hitters in the Caribbean World Series. He was a member of the all-tournament team there, having pitched for Puerto Rico and collected a 0.93 ERA in 10 innings before the tournament.

Since the start of the 2008 season, Parise has toured the hemisphere, playing in Iowa, Florida, Colombia, Missouri, Tennessee, Puerto Rico and then Venezuela for the Caribbean championship series.

His motivation wasn't just sightseeing.

"I feel like I had to do it for where I came from," Parise said. "I felt like it was something I had to do to put my name out there."

REDBIRD CHIRPS

■ **Shelby Miller** impressed the big league staff with his composure during one scoreless inning in his Grapefruit League debut. At 19, Miller was the first teenage pitcher to appear in a major league spring training game for the Cardinals since **Rick Ankiel** did at 18 in 1998.

■ **Maloney** won the team's George Kissel Award, which is given to the minor league coach who most embodied the teaching, fervor and fundamentals that personified Kissel, a longtime Cardinal coach.

SAN DIEGO | Padres

BY JOHN MAFFEI

A Healthy Start

PEORIA, ARIZ. **Donavan Tate** had a franchise-record \$6.25 million signing bonus tucked safely away and was eager to launch his professional career.

But he was submarined before he left the dock. Tate was diagnosed with a sports hernia two days after reporting to the organization's spring training complex in Arizona last summer. That forced the No. 3 pick in last June's draft to miss the rest of the minor league season as well as instructional league in October.

Then in late November, he suffered a broken jaw in an ATV accident while at home in Georgia.

To make up for lost time, Tate, an outfielder, was among 27 young prospects who arrived early in Arizona for special instruction with new field coordinator **Randy Johnson**.

Tate even spent 10 days in San Diego before reporting to Arizona to make sure he was ready.

As bad as 2009 ended, Tate was upbeat when he arrived in Arizona, considering himself lucky to not have been more seriously injured in the ATV accident.

"I'm not too concerned about the jaw," Tate said. "Everything is healed. I'm 100 percent healthy. I'm putting things behind me. I'm not concerned with the past, things like the hernia and the ATV accident. I'm ready to move forward."

This camp will help determine where the Padres place Tate when the season starts.

The likelihood of him making a full-season team were slim. So he'll probably stay in extended spring training and end up with short-season Eugene in the Northwest League or stick around Peoria for the Rookie-level Arizona League.

"Last year was a little bit of a setback," Tate said. "With the surgery, I didn't get a chance to play in any games. So this is helping me kind of get back in the swing of things."

FATHER FIGURES

■ **Radhames Liz**, a hard-throwing righthander who was claimed on waivers from the Orioles in November, allowed six runs on 10 hits in his first 5 innings of work in spring training. The Padres consider Liz a low-risk, high-reward prospect.

■ Righthander **Ernesto Frieri** was an injury victim early in camp, suffering a groin strain during a bullpen session. Frieri isn't a candidate to make the big league club, but Padres officials are anxious to see him perform after a good season at Double-A San Antonio.

Scheppers on a fast track for Rangers

TEXAS | Rangers

BY EVAN GRANT



For statistics, organization reports, prospect lists and recent drafts, check out: www.baseballamerica.com/today/teams

SURPRISE, ARIZ. The 2009 pitching draft pick on everybody's mind this season is Washington's **Stephen Strasburg**. Sure, that's following the trend. But for trendsetters, it would be wise to keep an eye on Rangers righthander **Tanner Scheppers**.

It's entirely possible Scheppers could beat Strasburg to the majors. The Rangers are hoping he's a second-half option for the pitching staff. The second half of 2010.

"In general, the goal is to introduce him to a pro routine, build up his arm strength, protect his arm and ultimately use him in such a way that he's available in the second half if

we feel like he can help us," general manager **Jon Daniels** said. "But, obviously, he's got to earn it."

So far, Scheppers, who turned 23 in January, has done nothing to make the Rangers think the plan is far-fetched. Scheppers was considered a top 10 pick in 2008, but a shoulder ailment that was misdiagnosed forced him to miss some time that season at Fresno State. He fell to the 48th pick in the draft and passed on Pittsburgh's offer. He pitched in the independent American Association in 2009 before the Rangers took him with the 44th pick overall. They signed him for \$1.25 million in September.

Scheppers was impressive during instructional league last fall, which helped earn him the non-roster invitation to spring training. In the spring, he wowed team officials during workouts, then unveiled a fastball that ranged from 96-98 mph in the first exhibition of the spring. He threw five fastballs in that inning,

all of them for strikes. In his second appearance, in a "B" game, he showed off his tight curveball for the first time. And for his third outing, several veteran players, already cleared to leave the dugout, decided to stick around and watch him pitch. The Rangers consider Scheppers a prospect as a starter, but that could change depending on the team's needs.

RANGER ROUNDUP

■ Outfielder **Steven Murphy**, who has played more games (332) at Double-A Frisco than any other player, did not report to camp and was expected to retire. Murphy, a 2005 14th-round pick, was the Northwest League's MVP in his first season, but never hit better than .277 after getting to Frisco. He hit .209/.277/.376 at Frisco and Oklahoma City last year.

■ Second baseman **Marcus Lemon** played some center field during the Arizona Fall League and is expected to get a longer look there when he returns to minor league camp. He spent the first month of camp with the big league club after shortstop **Khalil Greene** failed to report due to social anxiety disorder.



Tanner Scheppers

BILL MITCHELL

SEATTLE | Mariners

BY JOHN HICKEY

Healing Process

PEORIA, ARIZ. Eighteen months later, lefthander **Ryan Feierabend** is contending for a big league job again.

Following Tommy John surgery, he's back on the mound in Arizona with the Mariners and feeling very much like his old self again.

"Honestly, this was like my first time pitching at Safeco Field," Feierabend said. "That might sound weird, but for me having not faced a hitter in 18 months, it just felt so good to get out there, whether it was against my own teammates or whatever. To be able to go out there and throw strikes and be consistent, it was awesome."

It's an important time for Feierabend, because almost nobody in the organization has seen him pitch much. General manager **Jack Zduriencik** and the manager **Don Wakamatsu** were in different organizations when Feierabend last pitched.

The injury that sidelined him took place in the final week of April 2008, but Feierabend kept trying to pitch through the pain. It didn't work. He got called up at the end of that season after spending two months rehabbing, but even so he wasn't healthy. He tried to rest and rehabilitate his arm from November through February, but it didn't work.

Now he's back, although a long shot to make the roster at the moment.

"(It's taken) a lot of work and a lot of pain," he said. "I don't want to say it was helpful to have it done, but it was for me, to see what type of mental capacity I have and how to deal with an injury. I'd never been hurt and never been on the DL in my pro career before. It was a good test of my mental state to see where I was at."

MARINADE

■ First baseman **Tommy Everidge** was emotional after his first at-bat of the spring, a grand slam home run, as it was the first time he couldn't call his father to talk about it. **Will Everidge**, 50, died on Oct. 18 of kidney failure. "It's the worst thing I have ever gone through," Everidge said.

■ The Mariners signed righthander **Tom Wilhelmsen** to a minor league deal. Wilhelmsen was originally drafted in 2002 by the Brewers—with **Jack Zduriencik** as scouting director. He pitched well for low Class A Beloit in 2003, but sat out 2004 after failing two drug tests administered by the Brewers. In 2005, he retired but played independent ball last season and regained his 97 mph velocity. The Brewers called him back for a tryout, but he pinched a nerve in his shoulder and was given his official release from the team.

TAMPA BAY | Rays

BY MARC TOPKIN

Back In Action

PORT CHARLOTTE, FLA. A few years ago, Rays manager **Joe Maddon** couldn't tell pitching prospects **Wade Davis** and **Jake McGee** apart. "I didn't know if it was Wade McGee and Jake Davis," he said. "I didn't know who was who."

He was embellishing a bit (obviously since Davis is a righthander and McGee a lefty) but his point was that the two were routinely referred to in tandem, as if their careers would always be intertwined. But now there is another major difference as well—Davis has been to the big leagues, and McGee has not.

But that may not last long. McGee looked this spring to not only be ready physically, fully recovered from the July 2008 Tommy John surgery, but also mentally, reaching that stage Maddon often talks about of realizing he can be a major leaguer.

"When you see an arm like that, and everyone loves the 95 (mph) and the radar gun, but when you're doing that and throwing strikes, and with a breaking ball for a strike, that's what's really exciting," Maddon said. "Furthermore, he's getting that look like he belongs here, which really is scary good. I think Wade being here is motivational to him also, and that's a good thing."

McGee, 23, said he's excited just to be starting the season healthy and free of the tedious rehab work, and eager to see where it takes him. There has been talk of eventually converting McGee to a closer's role, but the Rays plan for him to begin the season starting so he can log the necessary innings and develop his full repertoire.

"All the work I've put in the last two years is paying off finally," McGee said. "They want me to go down and stretch out and be a starter down there for a little bit and have the mindset of being a starter and working on all three of my pitches, throwing them for strikes and down in the zone. I'm sure if they need me, they might put me in the bullpen."

COOL RAYS

■ Third baseman **Hank Blalock** was signed to a minor league contract. He has an out clause as of April 1, but may also end up playing at Durham if he has no other major league opportunities.

■ Shortstop **Tim Beckham**, the top pick of the 2008 draft, was reassigned to minor league camp in the first cuts so he could get more regular work after making a strong impression on manager **Joe Maddon**.

TORONTO | Blue Jays

BY LARRY MILLSON

Lesson Learned

DUNEDIN, FLA. **Brad Emaus** moved up to Double-A without missing a beat—at first.

After hitting .302/.380/.463 at high Class A Dunedin in 2008, Emaus made his Eastern League debut last April 8 with three doubles and four RBIs.

He played all season in Double-A and had what he terms "kind of an up-and-down year" at .253/.336/.376.

"It started good," Emaus said at major-league spring training camp. "Kind of had a pretty good skid there in the middle of the year. I just tried to recuperate from that. Once you get so low, there's only so much you can do to make up for it the rest of the year. It was kind of a learning year and hopefully this year will go a lot better."

He found some solace with his .317/.391/.417 performance in the Arizona Fall League, which was a confidence-booster. "It was, it gives you a little confidence," he said. "That's the name of this game I think is just having confidence at the plate, knowing you can do it. Played good out there and tried to carry it into the spring."

He also admits that after his good start he might have been thinking too far ahead.

"A lot of it was mental," he said. "I was coming off a good spring. I had a good first two months there and I just kind of started looking at numbers more than anything and it got in my head a little bit. I kind of got caught up where I was last year, I wanted to make it up to Triple-A so bad."

He now files the experience as part of the learning process.

"I've never ready had to go through that kind of struggle before and it was good for me," he said. "I feel good about it. I know now just to play and not worry about the things you can't control. It was tough going through it, it was an eye-opening experience, you can't let it get to you."

JAYS CHATTER

■ The organization will have a new video system this season with a video assistant in each of its minor league teams with one covering both Dunedin and the Gulf Coast League team. Coaches will be able to visit a private Web site to see video on each player.

■ Righthander **Casey Fien**, 26, was claimed off waivers from the Sox on March 4. The Red Sox had claimed him from the Tigers on March 1. He spent most of 2009 with Triple-A Toledo, going 2-1, 3.41 with 14 saves in 42 appearances.

WASHINGTON | Nationals

BY LACY LUSK

Against All Odds

VIERA, FLA. Not many big leaguers are found for \$6,000 bonuses or stand 5-foot-9 and weigh 170 pounds. By the end of this season, especially if all goes as well as it did last year, lefthanded reliever **Atahualpa Severino** may beat the odds.

After going 10-0, 2.62 in 69 innings with 15 saves between high Class A Potomac and Double-A Harrisburg, Severino claimed a spot on the 40-man roster this offseason. The 25-year-old then went 0-1, 1.74 in 10 innings in winter ball in his native Dominican Republic.

"I think what separates him is the fact that he enjoys the spotlight and he believes he's the right guy for the situation, no matter what it is," said **Trent Jewett**, who managed Severino last year at Potomac and may again this year at Triple-A Syracuse. "He believes his strengths will outlast the hitters' strengths."

In the Nationals' spring training home opener in Viera, Fla., Severino threw a shut-out inning against the Mets. He allowed one hit in a cameo that looked good on a staff that allowed 56 runs and took five losses in its first five spring games.

Severino signed in 2004 and missed all of 2005 after having Tommy John surgery. His fastball is generally in the high 80s or low 90s and he also has a two-seamer, plus two other pitches that can be effective.

"We're excited about him," farm director **Doug Harris** said. "Of our bullpen arms, he's a lefty who has a real chance to help us."

CAPITAL GAINS

■ The organization signed righthanded reliever **Rafael Martin**, a 25-year-old who grew up in California and became a prospect in the Mexican League, for a reported \$450,000. He was 6-3, 4.12 with 65 strikeouts in 63 innings last year for Saltillo. "Our Latin American coordinator (**Johnny DiPuglia**) did a tremendous job on him," Harris said.

■ Lefthander **Glenn Gibson**, who was traded straight up for Nationals right fielder **Elijah Dukes** in 2007, is back in the system after being released by the Rays. He was a fourth-round pick in 2006.



Atahualpa Severino

ED WOLFSTEIN

Flamethrowing Bettis still growing into ace

HOUSTON

Texas Tech coach Dan Spencer has no doubt that Red Raiders junior righthander Chad Bettis will pitch in the major leagues. For him, it's a question of when, not if.

Tulane coach Rick Jones, who coached Bettis last summer with Team USA, thinks he has a pretty good idea when.

"I think he'll pitch in the big leagues—quickly," Jones said at the end of the summer.

With an explosive fastball, an easy delivery, a sometimes-devastating breaking ball and an aggressive mentality, it's easy to see why Spencer and Jones regard Bettis as a cinch big leaguer. But in the short term, Bettis is still learning how to be an ace at the college level, as this is his first attempt at anchoring a weekend rotation.

"I feel like I've got a long ways to go to get where I expect myself to be at, but I feel like I'm moving in the right direction, for sure," Bettis said.

At times, Bettis can be downright overpowering. In two consecutive March starts against an offensive Texas Christian team in the Houston College Classic and then in a series in Fort Worth, Bettis racked up 19 strikeouts in 13 innings. But he also allowed 14 total runs (nine earned) and lost both of those outings. Overall, he was 2-2, 4.34 with 32 strikeouts and 11 walks over his first 29 innings in 2010.

For Bettis to become more consistent, he needs to throw more quality strikes. As good as his stuff is, Bettis gets in trouble when he leaves pitches up in the zone, just like any other pitcher.

"I've been telling him this spring, 'You have first-round stuff. If you want to be a first-rounder, it's about first-round command. You've got to be able to throw that thing on the dime,'" Spencer said. "He knows that. And his command is a lot better than it used to be, and his secondary stuff is a lot better, because he's had to throw it a lot more. When he came in here, even in the fall of his freshman year, if he'd get hit, he'd go harder, harder, harder, and the ball would get up, up up, straighter, straighter, straighter, and it would get hit harder, harder, harder."

An unsigned eighth-round pick by the Astros out of Monterrey High in Lubbock, Bettis earned comparisons to Jake Peavy for his size and his electric arm strength. He said he seriously considered signing with the Astros out of high school, but Spencer left Oregon State to join the Texas Tech staff that summer and helped convince Bettis to come to school.

Bettis said he has never regretted that decision, though it hasn't always been smooth sailing for him at Texas Tech. He went 4-5, 6.75 with 41 strikeouts and 29 walks in 68 innings as a starter his freshman year, and he continued show show explosive stuff but inconsistent command that summer in the Cape Cod League.

The Red Raiders decided to move him into a flex role as a sophomore. He would prepare to come out of the bullpen early in weekends, and if he was not called upon Friday or Saturday then he would start on Sunday. He took to the relief role, going 6-1, 3.59 with seven saves and a 58-30 strikeout-walk ratio in 73 innings.

Last summer, he served as the closer for Team USA, recording three saves and posting a 3.00 ERA with 11 strikeouts and three walks in nine innings. He worked in the mid-90s

and ran his fastball up to 98 mph in short stints, though he has worked more at 91-94 as a starter this spring. Bettis is not overly physical at 6-foot-1, 211 pounds, and the general scouting consensus is that he profiles best as a hard-throwing reliever. He said he feeds off the adrenaline of entering a close game in the late innings, and he got a particular thrill out of filling that role for Team USA.

"It was a great experience. I wish everyone that played college baseball got to experience that, because it's great to be part of something that's bigger than yourself," Bettis said of his time with the national team. "I remember July 4 when we were playing at the Durham Bulls' stadium, everyone just started chanting 'USA.' It was probably one of the most memorable experiences I'll have in my life. It was just incredible."

Spencer agrees that Bettis' attacking mentality and resilient arm make him a good fit in the bullpen, but the Red Raiders needed him more in the rotation and decided to use him as a starter this spring, at least for the time being. Bettis has developed a starter's repertoire since he arrived at Texas Tech. He scrapped the slider he came in with in favor of a hard slurve at 80-82 mph, and he has developed a changeup that has splitter action at times. He also mixes in a high-80s cutter.

Bettis has all the tools he needs to dominate in the Big 12; now he needs to do it. Spencer is confident Bettis' work habits will allow him to harness his potential.

"From a confidence standpoint and a work ethic standpoint, I'd like to tell you we've coached that into him, but he brought that with him," Spencer said. "He's a tough kid, he's a stubborn kid, which most of the guys that are great are. And he's a great workout guy who prepares physically and mentally. He's the real deal."

Wunderlich Tested

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA.

Phil Wunderlich takes his licks in the Louisville clubhouse.

"He gets picked on by the guys a lot," Cardinals coach Dan McDonnell said. "They call him Cookie Monster—he loves cookies. They like to pick on Phil because he's got everything together. He does great in the classroom, great in society, he's very businesslike when he shows up and just gets after it. He's probably the most popular guy on the team because he's figured it all out."

Wunderlich also commands respect from his teammates because he's about as tough as a baseball player can be. The Cardinals know it will take about four broken limbs to keep Wunderlich out of the lineup, and there's no guarantee he'd sit out even then.

As a sophomore last year, Wunderlich tore the labrum in his right (throwing) shoulder the second weekend of the season while sliding into second base on a steal, but he didn't know it at the time. He could barely lift his arm the next morning, so he sat out that day's game. It would be the only game he'd miss in 2009. He played all year in the outfield, hitting .367/.444/.669 with 18 home runs and 78 RBIs.

After Louisville's season ended in the Fullerton Super Regional, Wunderlich went to the Team USA trials in North Carolina and had a great first day, but then the pain in his shoulder flared up. He returned to Louisville and had surgery to repair the torn labrum and



Texas Tech righthander Chad Bettis has shown dominant stuff but is working on consistency

ANDREW WOOLLEY

a torn rotator cuff in his shoulder.

So Wunderlich had a huge sophomore campaign while playing all season with a serious shoulder injury. Big deal—that's nothing.

On Tuesday, April 7, Wunderlich was hit in the face by a pitch in the eighth inning of a game against Indiana. He suffered a broken nose and a fractured orbital.

"I was in a fair amount of pain for a couple days—I was pretty miserable," Wunderlich recalled. "My nose didn't really hurt; my face hurt more than anything. But it wasn't nearly as bad as it looked. It looked really bad. My nose was over here for a few days until I had surgery and they put it back into place, but my eye was swollen shut the night it happened, and my nose was out here. I went to the doctor that Thursday thinking they were going to fix my face, and he said, 'There's no way we can do this right now with that swelling.' So I played that weekend, and the following Tuesday I think we played Kentucky, so there was no way I was missing that game."

Wunderlich played four games before doctors reset his nose. Because of the Easter holiday, Louisville opened its series against Pittsburgh on Thursday, just two days after he was hit in the face. Wunderlich started that game at DH with a facemask attached to his helmet, and he cranked a game-winning, three-run homer in the seventh inning.

"I just love to play," Wunderlich said. "If I feel like I'm in pain, as long as I feel like I'm not hurting the team, I want to be out there."

That feeling, of course, is mutual. For starters, the 6-foot, 225-pound Wunderlich provides a fearsome lefthanded power presence in the middle of Louisville's lineup. Through 15 games in 2010, Wunderlich is hitting .371/.420/.758 with a team-leading six homers and 21 RBIs. Just moments after he smacked a walk-off homer against Minnesota in the Big Ten/Big East Challenge, McDonnell said Wunderlich still wasn't quite 100 percent recovered from his offseason shoulder surgery and still had not found his stride offensively. Wunderlich credited trainer Pat Hassell with getting him healthy enough to play.

"Phil hasn't even locked in yet," McDonnell said. "It just shows you how talented he is to put up some offensive numbers when right now he's just not complete. He's a little long at times, and he's getting beat on some balls. But he's such a bright kid—very confident."

Wunderlich's savvy is another reason the Cardinals love having him on the field. He is a natural leader with excellent baseball instincts, and he makes his teammates better. But Wunderlich did not find his way onto the field much as a freshman. A third baseman in high school in Chicago, Wunderlich was blocked at the hot corner by All-American Chris Dominguez, and he was not athletic enough to play an outfield spot, so he was limited to DH duties.

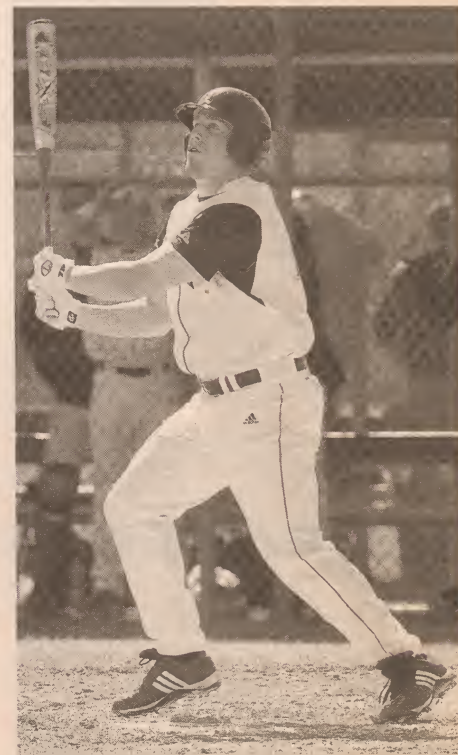
"You've got to tip your hat to Phil: After his freshman year, he knew he had to become a better athlete," McDonnell said. "He went to the trainer himself and the strength and conditioning coach and said, 'I need to do more to become a better athlete.' When Dominguez decided to come back during Phil's sophomore year, Phil decided, 'You know what? I don't want to be the DH again. I need to get on the field, and I want to win the left field job.' So he transformed his body."

Now Dominguez is gone, having signed with the Giants as a third-round pick last year, so Wunderlich has taken over most of the playing time at his natural third base, though he also plays some first base. He's not a flashy defender, and it's clear that his bat will have to carry him in pro ball, but he has been steady at third, fielding at a .986 clip through 15 games.

"He's not Chris Dominguez and he doesn't try to be," McDonnell said. "Chris is gifted with that power arm and can throw mid-90s off the mound, but I felt like Phil was going to do a great job. He catches every ball and is very accurate with it. And he got to watch Chris for two years, so he knows the system, and I really don't have to position him much. He knows when to come up, when to move over, when to not give up the double. He's like having an extra coach on the field, so it's an asset to our defense."

By now, it's clear that Wunderlich is an asset to the Cardinals in many ways. He has played a big role in Louisville's 14-1 start, and he appreciates how fortunate he is to be part of a team with legitimate College World Series aspirations.

"It's awesome to be a part of, and it's something you can't take for granted, because baseball's a hard game," Wunderlich said. "You've really got to appreciate how good our team as a whole is, because it's really something special, I think."



Louisville slugger Phil Wunderlich played through a torn labrum—and worse—last year

RICK BATTLE

FROM THE web

STREAKIN' ARIZONA STATE

For the third straight season, Arizona State has jumped out to a hot start. The Sun Devils improved to 15-0 after sweeping Auburn in week four. Last year, the Devils started 8-0, and in 2008 they started 19-0. Over the first three weeks of the last three seasons, they are 33-1.

But what's different about this year's hot start is that Pat Murphy is not involved. Murphy had proven himself as one of the most successful coaches in college baseball during his 16-year tenure at ASU, but he was forced to resign in the midst of an investigation into NCAA violations on Nov. 20, just three months before the 2010 season started. Former Murphy assistant Tim Esmay took over as interim head coach and has done yeoman's work establishing some stability in a reeling program. The Sun Devils were not derailed by the fallout from Murphy's high-profile departure, and they haven't been derailed by the absence of senior ace Josh Spence, who has yet to pitch this season because of soreness in his forearm. His return was still at least two weeks away, though he has begun to throw again.

"I think it's just a total credit to the kids," Esmay said. "The kids, they're obviously showing they're pretty resilient. I kind of knew that going in; we just have such strong leadership—those guys are the best. There's some strength in that clubhouse, and there's strength in the assistant coaches . . . I think everybody feels like it's still the Sun Devil Way, I think that's the whole key."



Zack MacPhee

I think everyone wanted to make sure that the expectations are the same. There is a lot of energy out here, but these kids just love to play. They love to play."

Of course, Murphy and Spence aren't the only notable absences from the ASU team that reached the College World Series in 2009. Two-time Pacific-10 Conference pitcher of the year Mike Leake is gone too, as is Pac-10 player of the year Jason Kipnis. Yet so far, the Sun Devils haven't missed a beat on the mound or in the lineup, posting a 2.95 ERA and hitting .371/.480/.615 as a team. Some of those numbers were accrued in eight games against Northern Illinois and Towson, but Arizona State also swept through a solid field at the Coca-Cola Classic, beating Cal Poly, Oregon State, UC Riverside and Florida International.

The Sun Devils always hit, and though they're less offensive than they were a year ago, they have gotten breakout sophomore campaigns thus far from sparkplug second baseman Zack MacPhee (.545/.638/1.045 with 19 RBIs and a nation-leading seven triples) and first baseman

Zach Wilson (.440/.525/.700), helping to fill the offensive void. The bigger story has been on the mound.

Junior righthander Seth Blair has filled in admirably atop the weekend rotation, going 2-0, 3.43 with 24 strikeouts and eight walks in 21 innings. He's always had premium arm strength, but in the past his lack of advanced feel for pitching seemed to cause Murphy to lose confidence in him in big spots, like in Omaha last year, when ASU brought Leake and Spence back on short rest in their third and fourth games rather than give the ball to Blair. This year, Esmay and new pitching coach Ken Knutson have shown total confidence in Blair.

"The biggest positive for him is he hasn't tried to be somebody he's not," Esmay said. "He's matured, and one of the things that we've had conversations with him about has been, 'We want you to understand that we're not coming to get you. We want you to figure out that you're going to be in situations where you're going to be uncomfortable, so we'll let you figure out how to get out of those situations and minimize the innings.'"

"He's learned that one pitch or one swing doesn't necessarily mean the inning has gotten away from him. That's been the biggest difference from last year—he's been able to pitch out of some situations. And the stuff's good, the arm's fresh. He's been up to the mid-90s, pitching in the low 90s. He's always had a pretty good slider, but he's learning how to use his changeup a little bit more and learning how to throw those pitches where he wants them to be."

Behind Blair in the rotation, Arizona State has gotten solid work from sophomore righty Jake

Borup (4-0, 2.14) and junior righty Merrill Kelly (3-0, 3.38 before an ERA-inflating win against Auburn). Their emergence has allowed Esmay to leave sophomore lefthander Mitchell Lambson (2.30 ERA, 23-3 K-BB in 16 innings) and highly touted freshman righty Jake Barrett (2.25 ERA, 17-2 K-BB in eight innings) in the bullpen, where they team with sophomore righty Jordan Swagerty (1.00 ERA, 12-4 K-BB in nine innings) to form a menacing trio. Lambson, owner of a devastating changeup, proved himself as an elite lefthanded bullpen option as a freshman, while Swagerty has added strength and seen his velocity jump into the low to mid-90s. Barrett throws even harder, sitting in the mid-90s and touching 97—with command.

Esmay envisions his bullpen as a potential weapon the way Arizona's was in 2008, when relievers Daniel Schlereth, Ryan Perry and Jason Stoffel helped lead the Wildcats to super regionals.

"I learned a lot from watching U of A that year," Esmay said. "Running the offense, it's almost like you had to have a little more sense of urgency with your guys. The game almost had to be set up early. It made for a tough mindset, and I always put that in the back of my mind and thought, 'Look at the feeling we've got going into this series and how we have to approach it.' They shortened the game. It's kind of what I would like to happen with this staff."

Arizona State using Arizona as a model? Maybe things have changed in Tempe more than it appears at first glance. It's still the Sun Devil Way, for sure, but Arizona State is finding out that there's a lot to be gained by embracing the Esmay Way, too.



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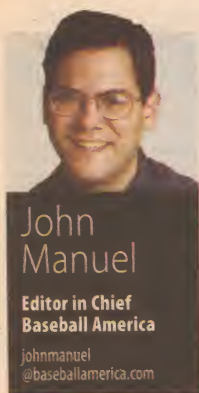
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Hahn unleashes wrath on hitters



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Back in their youth baseball days, Jesse Hahn and Matt Harvey were friendly rivals. Hahn grew up in Groton, Conn., while Harvey grew up about 15 minutes away in Mystic. "It was always Groton all-stars against Mystic all-stars," Hahn recalls.

When they got to high school, and Fitch Senior drew students from both Mystic and Groton, Hahn and Harvey became teammates, and Harvey emerged as a star.

"Matt really took off in high school," Hahn said. "He developed a lot quicker, and all of a sudden he got big-time, going to showcases all over the country. I was still kind of a small kid, and I had talent, but I didn't have the body to go along with it."

Hahn had his share of success, pitching three one-hitters and a no-hitter while setting a state record with a 0.17 ERA in 2007. However, while Harvey got drafted in the third round by the Angels, Hahn wasn't selected.

Virginia Tech was by far the biggest college to offer a scholarship to the tall righthander, who was 6-foot-4, 170 pounds as a prep senior. Hahn chose the Hokies over Bryant (R.I.) and Maine, while Harvey spurned the Angels and headed to North Carolina, which

was making its second of four consecutive College World Series visits that summer.

Since then, Harvey has gone to Omaha twice and won 14 games. But talking to three scouts in March confirmed what the numbers seem to say—Hahn, once Harvey's wingman, now is likely to be drafted first come June.

Growing Into His Role

Hahn found the "potential" tag ill-fitting his first two seasons at Virginia Tech. His pitcher's frame (he's up to 6-foot-5, 200 pounds) attracted scouts, and the Major League Scouting Bureau slapped a 60 Overall Future Potential grade (on the 20-80 scale) on him coming into 2010.

All Hahn had done was post a 5.01 ERA in two seasons with the Hokies, with 104 hits allowed in 88 innings and just 59 strikeouts. He even struggled in the Cape Cod League in 2009, striking out 17 in 15 innings but also posting a 5.28 ERA. He started as a freshman and relieved as a sophomore but posted only one save with a 4-9 record.

"We were losing games with a closer out there throwing 98 and getting it turned around," Virginia Tech coach Pete Hughes said. "He really has made the move this year from thrower to pitching. He's matured a lot in his three years here, he's worked with our pitching coach, Dave Turgeon, to really make the adjustments he needed to make."

Hahn sent his draft stock soaring with a seven-inning outing against West Virginia in February. With scouts out in droves to see how he matched up with Mountaineers

preseason All-American Jedd Gyorko, Hahn dominated, tossing seven scoreless innings without issuing a walk. He gave up five singles and struck out four while getting 12 ground-ball outs, leaving one American League scout to say, "He could have gotten major leaguers out that day." Hahn agreed it was "probably my best start."

Hahn's fastball sits in the 92-96 mph range, and he commanded it to all parts of the zone against West Virginia. While he also throws a curveball, slider and changeup, scouts say none of Hahn's secondary pitches is a swing-and-miss offering at this time. He had better command of his secondary stuff against Maryland, striking out nine in his first Atlantic Coast Conference start to improve to 4-0, 0.64 with 27 strikeouts and just five walks in 28 innings.

"In my first two years, I always had stuff but didn't put it all together; I just lacked success," Hahn said. "I had a different approach this year. I prepared better, I was more dedicated to the weight room and my training . . . The past two years, I just believed I could let it go and throw my fastball by somebody. Now I realize you have to locate. We worked on my stride, getting better balance over the rubber and finishing out front more in my delivery, and now I'm locating my fastball better, locating it down and that's allowed me to have some success."

Focus On Blacksburg

It's also brought wanted attention to Virginia Tech's baseball program. The Hokies have



Jesse Hahn was throwing a 92-96 mph fastball

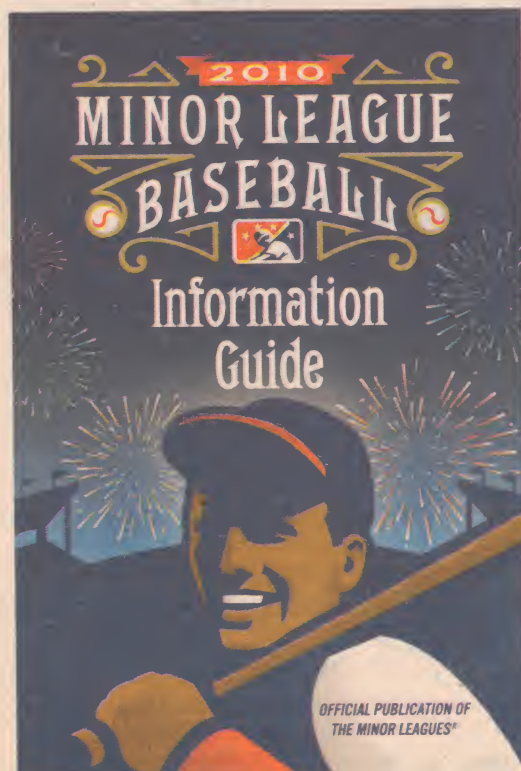
four intriguing draft prospects this season, including sophomore-eligible righty Mathew Price, fifth-year senior catcher Steve Domec and junior outfielder Austin Wates. Scouts have mixed opinions on the other three but are unanimous in their interest in Hahn, who has improved his command while Harvey's has waned.

Harvey still gets plenty of attention. After all, he still throws in the mid-90s as well and has added a power slider this year that has impressed scouts. Hahn just wants a little of what his former teammate has experienced.

"The draft hype, I view it as a good thing," Hahn said. "It allows all of us to take on a leadership role for the younger guys and it brings them some attention. But it takes a back seat to the teams. The goal is to go to the College World Series, and you have to do that as a team. Without a team, you're nothing."

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Versatile O'Conner moves back behind plate

BY CONOR GLASSEY

Coming into the summer, Justin O'Conner was a bit of a riddle.

Was the senior at Cowan High in Muncie, Ind., better as a position player—where he projected to be a solid third baseman with power potential? Or was he a better prospect as a pitcher—where he showed a 90-94 mph fastball and flashed a good curveball?

O'Conner threw a twist into the riddle toward the end of the showcase circuit when he began to work out behind the plate as a catcher. The move makes sense for the 6-foot-1, 190-pound Arkansas recruit. He wasn't likely to stay at shortstop as a pro, but he has the arm and athleticism to have a chance behind the plate, which keeps him at a coveted up-the-middle position.

Tools To Succeed

He's not moving to the position blindly. O'Conner used to catch when he was 13 and 14 years old, but the combination of pitching and catching was too much for his young arm, so he moved to shortstop.

"I think if you talk to 30 scouts, shoot, all 30 of them may say they like him somewhere different," a National League area scout said. "I personally think he can stay in the infield and I also think he can catch. He's definitely raw back there, but that's not something you can just jump into and be polished. He's a good enough athlete and he's got great makeup. I think he's going to have a chance to be able to catch with an extremely strong arm. This is a guy that threw 96 (mph) across the diamond. He's one of those kids you could mold into just about whatever you want."

O'Conner had one of the busiest summers of any prospect on the showcase circuit. He started off in Minneapolis in June at the Perfect Game National Showcase, where he won the event's metal-bat home run derby. From there, he went to Tournament of Stars in Cary, N.C., then to the East Coast Professional Showcase in Lakeland, Fla., and the Area Code Games in Long Beach. O'Conner got the opportunity to play at Petco Park as an Aflac All-American and then finished in October with the World Wood Bat Championship in Jupiter, Fla.

And, of course, all of those national events were in addition to playing with his summer league team, the Indiana Bulls—a program that has produced major leaguers and prospects such as Reds third baseman Scott Rolen, Blue Jays outfielder Adam Lind and Nationals righthander Drew Storen.

"It kind of wore on me a little bit towards the end of it, but it was a lot of fun," O'Conner said. "I think I was home probably seven days in the summer, all together. But it was a lot of fun being gone. I like playing, so it was fun."

Jupiter was the first national event where O'Conner was going to show what he could do behind the plate, but he sprained his ankle in his team's second game and was sidelined for the remainder of the weekend.

With the ankle healed, O'Conner has been doing drills three to four times a week to work on his hands, blocking and footwork. He said he won't be catching exclusively for Cowan this spring—as they have an incumbent backstop—but estimated he'd get behind the plate for seven or eight of the team's games.

"It's going really well," O'Conner said. "I've had a lot of guys that really know what they're talking about help me out and give me tips and work with me."

He had a phenomenal junior season, hitting .521 with eight doubles and 19 home runs over 96 at-bats. On the mound, he went 7-0,



Indiana prep product Justin O'Conner has pro ability both as a pitcher and in the batter's box

0.30 with 101 strikeouts and 13 walks over 47 innings.

While O'Conner has a great arm and is a talented pitcher, his bat is advanced enough that he's considered a stronger prospect as a position player. This draft is robust in pitching prospects but thinner in hitters. Plus, conventional wisdom is that it's easier to transition back to the mound as a fallback option than it is to go back to hitting after not doing it for a couple years.

"As far as a high school kid, he's got some special pop off the bat," the scout said. "It makes that sound that's kind of a little different than the average cat. He's got the bat speed, he's got the raw juice, he has the ability to drive the ball the other way which, for a high school kid, is pretty impressive. So, I think at this point it's refining the pitch recognition and seeing a little bit better stuff, but he's definitely projectable at the plate as well. He's got quick, strong wrists."

One Step At A Time

O'Conner is currently listed at 6-foot-1, 190 pounds. He'll probably need to fill out a little if he's going to remain at catcher full-time, but he isn't hitting the gym too hard just yet, because he wants to keep his options open.

"Right now I'm not just because I don't know for sure that's what I'm going to do," O'Conner said. "I'm on a weight program four days a week, but not trying to get too bulked up because I want to keep my flexibility and all that stuff."

Between adjusting to a new position, likely being pitched around more frequently and trying to manage the hype and scrutiny of being one of the best players in the country, things probably won't come as easily for O'Conner this spring, but he's taking it all in stride.

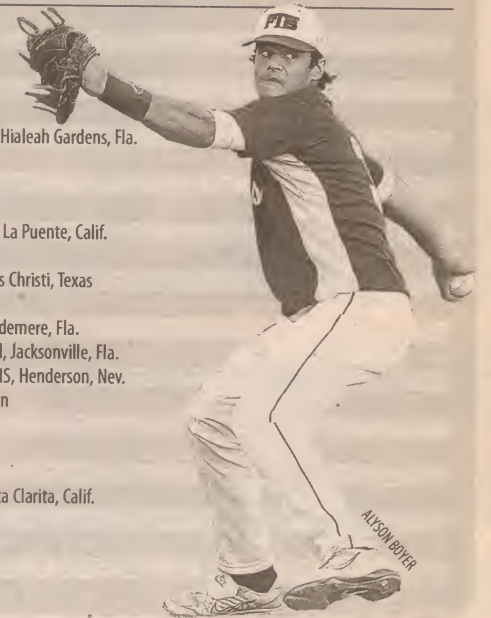
"I'm just trying to have a good season," he said. "I haven't really thought about numbers or anything like that. I just want to have fun and win."

SNEAK PEEK AT 2012

Last issue, we published a Top 50 overall prospect list for the 2011 draft. This time, we take an even deeper look into our crystal ball for a sneak peek at the best talents for 2012. Obviously a lot can change between now and then, but this is a snap shot of how the class is shaking out right now. This list doesn't factor in current high schoolers that may attend junior colleges or become draft-eligible sophomores. The list features a few players with notable ties. Lance McCullers is the son of the former big leaguer by the same name and Deven Marrero's cousin is Nationals prospect Chris Marrero.

For an extended look at the 2012 Top 50, visit BaseballAmerica.com/prospectplus

Rank	Player	Pos.	Year	School
1.	Addison Russell	SS	HS	Pace (Fla.) HS
2.	Lance McCullers	RHP/SS	HS	Jesuit HS, Tampa
3.	Kenny Diekroeger	SS/3B	Jr.	Stanford
4.	Jake Barrett	RHP	Jr.	Arizona State
5.	Jake Stewart	OF	Jr.	Stanford
6.	Albert Almora	OF	HS	Mater Academy, Hialeah Gardens, Fla.
7.	Stephen Perez	SS	Jr.	Miami
8.	Brian Goodwin	OF	Jr.	North Carolina
9.	Austin Maddox	C	Jr.	Florida
10.	Rio Ruiz	3B	HS	Bishop Amat HS, La Puente, Calif.
11.	Deven Marrero	SS*	Jr.	Arizona State
12.	Courtney Hawkins	RHP/OF	HS	Carroll HS, Corpus Christi, Texas
13.	Derek Dennis	SS	Jr.	Michigan
14.	Jesse Winker	OF/LHP	HS	Olympia HS, Windermere, Fla.
15.	Hayden Hurst	LHP	HS	The Bolles School, Jacksonville, Fla.
16.	Joey Gallo	3B/RHP	HS	Bishop Gorman HS, Henderson, Nev.
17.	Dylan Floro	RHP	Jr.	Cal State Fullerton
18.	Sam Selman	LHP	Jr.	Vanderbilt
19.	Michael Heller	RHP	Jr.	Florida
20.	Mark Appel	RHP	Jr.	Stanford
21.	Trey Williams	3B/OF	HS	Valencia HS, Santa Clarita, Calif.
22.	Cohl Walla	OF	Jr.	Texas
23.	Michael Zunino	C	Jr.	Florida
24.	Christian Jones	LHP	Jr.	Oregon
25.	Taylor Rogers	LHP	Jr.	Kentucky



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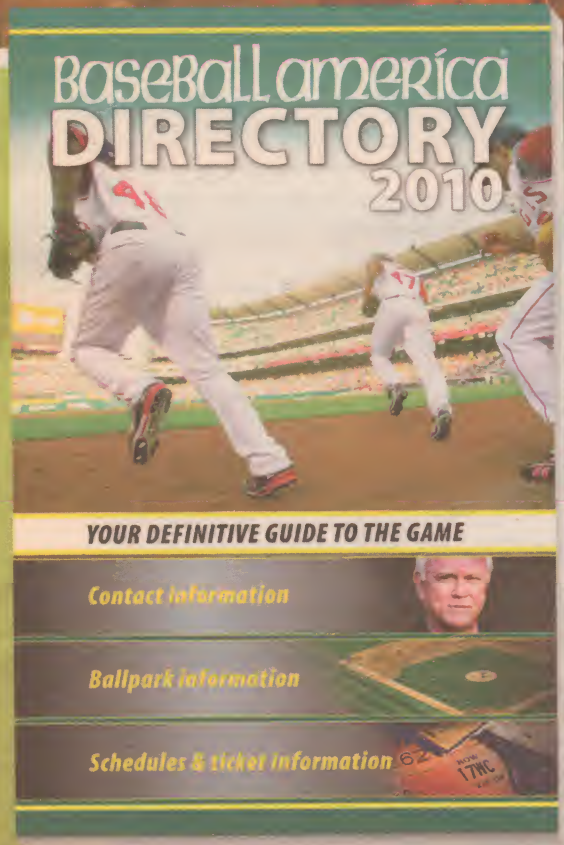
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Tar Heel State talent rises for 2010 but may peak in 2011

BY NATHAN RODE

North Carolina's impact on the draft has grown in the last decade as the state has grown. It will be hard for the state to surpass the level of talent it produced in 2006—when the college ranks produced first-rounders Andrew Miller and Daniel Bard, while the prep ranks included Dustin Ackley, Alex White and Lonnie Chisenhall (see page 10).

The 2010 draft class in the state appears strong, with three players—outfielder Ty Linton, infielder Connor Narron and catcher Matt Roberts—ranked among the High School Top 100. However, 2011 is shaping up as the best prep class in the state since '06 and '07, a year when a half-dozen Tar Heel State prep products got popped in the first 10 rounds.

Leading the 2011 class are three righthanders, all verbally committed to play their college ball at North Carolina. They are: Dillon Maples of Pinecrest High, in Southern Pines; Benton Moss of Rocky Mount High and Adam Griffin of Forsyth Country Day School in Lewisville. It's still far too early to tell whether these young athletes will end up at school or where a team may elect to take them in the draft, but all three are certainly large spots on the prospect radar.

Maples, the top prospect in the state for 2011, has a slender frame and broad shoulders. He is not an imposing figure on the mound, but don't be fooled. He has a strong lower half that helps him double as a standout kicker on the Pinecrest football team. His delivery is easy and generates a fastball that touches 93 mph with no problem. At the Impact Invitational in Cary, N.C., Maples impressed spectators in what was his first start of the season. He touched several 92-93s in the first inning and settled in at 88-91, inducing bad contact with a lively heater while mixing in a good, yet inconsistent, curveball. He also showed off his strength by crushing an opposite-field home run that easily cleared 350 feet. Through three appearances Maples was 2-0, 0.00 with 19 strikeouts, one hit and four walks in 12 innings.

Jeff Hewitt has been the head coach at Pinecrest for 12 years. Each year, the coaching staff and players head to the local Little League for their opening day to help out. Several years ago Hewitt saw a kid throwing in the bullpen and was hoping that the 6-foot-4 gentleman next to him was his father. The kid was Maples and the man was in fact his father, Tim, a second round pick of the Orioles in 1979.

"You could tell he had it," Hewitt said. "As a high school coach you have those guys you can't wait until they get there. You can tell he's played a lot of baseball at a young age."

While Maples is blessed with talent, it's safe to say he's had plenty of professional instruction along the way. His father reached Double-A, and the Pinecrest pitching coach is James Baldwin, a fourth-round pick out of Pinecrest in 1990 and major league righthander of 11 seasons. Baldwin's son, James III, is an athletic center fielder and 2010 draft prospect. He glides at his position showing tremendous range, and his athleticism plays all over the diamond. An Elon recruit, he hasn't focused solely on

baseball in high school—he's also a standout football and basketball player—and his stock was rising early in the spring.

Silent Assassin

In 2009, scouts flocked to Rocky Mount High, in Northeastern North Carolina, to evaluate Brian Goodwin, now an outfielder at UNC. If they were lucky they caught a glimpse of a sophomore that they would return to see just two years later. Moss is a wiry righthander that doesn't light up the radar gun—not yet at least—but can touch 92 with his fastball and hurl plus offspeed stuff. His best asset is quite possibly his head as he is in the top five in his class in academics.

"He probably should be going to Harvard instead of Carolina," Rocky Mount head coach Kent Cox said. "But he wants to be a Tar Heel."

Cox is in his first season at the helm of Rocky Mount, but he saw Moss come in as a raw freshman that wasn't really sure about his baseball aspirations. Now he's developed into one of the best arms in the state.

"We expect him to shut teams down," Cox added. "He hits his spots where I call him and gets his offspeed stuff over. He's a quiet leader that just goes about his business on the mound."

Moss had no trouble shutting offenses down in his first two starts of the season. Through 11 innings pitched he had surrendered just one run, two hits and one walk while striking out 14. He owns a record of 2-0, 0.64.

Andy Partin runs Impact Baseball, a player development program for high school players and younger in North Carolina and neighboring states. Some of the Impact players play on the Dirtbags, Partin's summer league team. Moss is a captain of that team and Partin first saw him pitch between his freshman and sophomore years.

"He was a skinny kid, not very physical," he said. "He was in the 82-84 range. Now he still has that rail-thin body but has added some weight and strength. I've seen him up to 93."

Two-Way Talent

Head west across the state to the outskirts of Winston-Salem and you will find another athletic, strong-armed righthander in Griffin. Griffin may not be as polished as Maples or Moss, but he's a prospect in his own right and could have an opportunity to be a two-way player at the college level.

Griffin stands at 6-foot-1, 180 pounds so he's not a prototypical projection righty, but he's athletic and has very good arm strength. He recently faced Charlotte Christian School, which has Linton patrolling center field. Linton is committed to UNC for baseball and football. He's one of the top linebacker recruits in the country and stands at a very physical 6-foot-2, 195 pounds. In the game against Forsyth Country Day he went 3-for-3, scorching two doubles and a single while also being hit by a pitch. He's raw as a baseball player, but is an great athlete with incredible strength.

Griffin only pitched an inning of relief. In that inning his



Dillon Maples fires a fastball up to 93 mph from an easy delivery and shows flashes of good secondary pitches

fastball ranged from 88-93 and sat 89-91. He also threw a couple breaking balls that acted as slurve, sitting 71-72. At the East Coast Pro Showcase in Lakeland, Fla., Griffin was throwing way across his body. He's toned it down since then and is continuing to work on his delivery with Partin, who is also the head coach at Forsyth Country Day.

"He's come a long way," Partin said. "His body has changed and he's matured. He's really committed to changing his delivery. He's been very across his body. We've lined his hips back up. When he was coming set his heel was turned to the third base dugout."

Partin has been coaching Griffin since he was a freshman touching 84 with his fastball. He says Forsyth's field can't hold him for his long toss sessions. However, there's still some work to be done for Griffin.

"He needs to throw his slider harder with more depth," Partin said. "Sometimes his hands break late. He misses up or down and away because his arm is so quick."

Through his first three appearances Griffin tossed six innings, allowing three hits and two walks while striking out 12 and holding a 1-0, 0.00 record.

These three righthanders are just a taste of what their state has to offer at the high school level. North Carolina hasn't really flown under the radar in the last decade when it comes to the draft thanks to some elite high school players and deep college talent. But it continues to get better each year and the underclassmen may be able to bring it to a new level.

ONLINE NOW



High School Blog For expanded high school coverage, with commentary, visit the High School Blog. www.baseballamerica.com/blog/high-school/

Baseball America

HIGH SCHOOL TOP 25

Explorers Take Over

The first in-season Baseball America/National High School Baseball Coaches Association poll saw a change at the top, but relatively minimal shifting as some teams are yet to play. Bellaire (Texas) High lost its season opener, then rattled off 14 wins before losing a second game and dropping to No. 2. Miami's Columbus High has bounced back from an early loss and stands at 7-1 with key wins over city foes South High, Braddock High and Southwest High. Capistrano Valley High of Mission Viejo, Calif., took the biggest tumble, falling to No. 23 after losing two of its first five contests. Only one team entered the top 25 this week. Northshore High of Slidell, Miss., got off to a hot start at 11-0 and jumped up from being ranked No. 32 in the preseason.

ABOUT THE CHART The staffs of Baseball America and the NHBSCA compile the Top 25 rankings. In-season polls will be conducted every two weeks and released every other Tuesday throughout the season. Records indicated are as of March 14 and do not include ties.

RANK	SCHOOL	PREVIOUS	RECORD	RANK	SCHOOL	PREVIOUS	RECORD
1	Columbus HS, Miami	10-1	2	14	Rancho Buena Vista HS, Vista, Calif.	2-0	14
2	Bellaire (Texas) HS	14-2	1	15	Owasso (Okla.) HS	7-0	17
3	Bishop Gorman HS, Las Vegas	2-0	5	16	Walsh Jesuit HS, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio	0-0	19
4	Farragut HS, Knoxville	0-0	4	17	The Woodlands (Texas) HS	10-3	9
5	Edison HS, Huntington Beach, Calif.	4-1	3	18	Alonso HS, Tampa	6-1	18
6	Menchville HS, Newport News, Va.	0-0	6	19	Clovis West HS, Fresno, Calif.	7-1	21
7	Naples (Fla.) HS	7-1	8	20	Thomas HS, New York	0-0	20
8	Roswell (Ga.) HS	7-0	11	21	Northshore HS, Slidell, Miss.	11-1	32
9	Sumrall (Miss.) HS	6-0	12	22	Germantown Academy, Fort Washington, Pa.	0-0	22
10	Rocky Mountain HS, Fort Collins, Colo.	0-0	10	23	Capistrano Valley HS, Mission Viejo, Calif.	3-2	7
11	Barbe HS, Lake Charles, La.	10-1	15	24	St. Edward HS, Lakewood, Ohio	0-0	24
12	Hamilton HS, Chandler, Ariz.	8-1	16	25	Severna Park (Md.) HS	0-0	25
13	St. Rita HS, Chicago	0-0	13	Teams that dropped out can be viewed on BaseballAmerica.com			



Now online In addition to posting a new Top 25 poll every two weeks, check back throughout the high school season to read features on the top high school players and teams around the country. www.baseballamerica.com/today/high-school/team-rankings

2010 FARM SYSTEM DIRECTORY

ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS

Class	Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Reno	Pacific Coast	Brett Butler	Rick Burleson	Mike Parrott
Double-A	Mobile	Southern	Rico Brogna	Turner Ward	Dan Carlson
High A	Visalia	California	Audo Vicente	Alan Zinter	Erik Sabel
Low A	South Bend	Midwest	Mark Haley	Francisco Morales	Wellington Cepeda
Short-season	Yakima	Northwest	Bob Didier	Andy Abad	Doug Drabek
Rookie	Missoula	Pioneer	Hector de la Cruz	Jason Hardtke	Gil Heredia

ATLANTA BRAVES

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Gwinnett	International	Dave Brundage	Jamie Dismuke	Derek Botelho
Double-A	Mississippi	Southern	Phillip Wellman	Garey Ingram	Marty Reed
High A	Myrtle Beach	Carolina	Rocket Wheeler	Rick Albert	Kent Willis
Low A	Rome	South Atlantic	Randy Ingle	Bobby Moore	Jim Czajkowski
Rookie	Danville	Appalachian	Paul Runge	Carlos Mendez	Derrick Lewis
Rookie	Orlando	Gulf Coast	Luis Ortiz	Sixto Lezcano	Gabe Luckert

BALTIMORE ORIOLES

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach(es)	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Norfolk	International	Gary Allenson	Richie Hebner	Mike Griffin
Double-A	Bowie	Eastern	Brad Kommink	Moe Hill	Kennie Steenstra
High A	Frederick	Carolina	Orlando Gomez	Denny Hocking	Blaine Beatty
Low A	Delmarva	South Atlantic	Ryan Minor	Mike Devereaux	Troy Mattes
Short-season	Aberdeen	New York-Penn	Gary Kendall	C. Devaraz/J. Alfaro	Scott McGregor
Rookie	Bluefield	Appalachian	Einar Diaz	Leo Gomez	Larry McCall
Rookie	Sarasota	Gulf Coast	Ramon Sambo	Milt May	Calvin Maduro

BOSTON RED SOX

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach(es)
Triple-A	Pawtucket	International	Torey Lovullo	Gerald Perry	Rich Sauveur
Double-A	Portland	Eastern	Arnie Beyeler	Dave Joppie	Bob Kipper
High A	Salem	Carolina	Kevin Feblis	Carlos Feblis	Dick Such
Low A	Greenville	South Atlantic	Billy McMillon	Luis Lopez	Kevin Walker
Short-season	Lowell	New York-Penn	George Crabbe	George Lombard	Kevin Walker
Rookie	Fort Myers	Gulf Coast	Dave Tomlin	U.L. Washington	Walter Miranda

CHICAGO CUBS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Iowa	Pacific Coast	Ryne Sanberg	Von Joshua	Mike Mason
Double-A	Tennessee	Southern	Bill Dancy	Tom Beyers	Dennis Lewallyn
High Class A	Daytona	Florida State	Buddy Bailey	Richie Zisk	Tom Pratt
Low Class A	Peoria	Midwest	Casey Kopitzke	Barbaro Garbey	David Rosario
Short-season	Bosie	Northwest	Jody Davis	Ricardo Medina	Jeff Fassero
Rookie	Mesa	Arizona	Juan Cabreja	Desi Wilson	Rick Tronerud

CHICAGO WHITE SOX

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Charlotte	International	Chris Chambliss	Gary Ward	Richard Dotson
Double-A	Birmingham	Southern	Ever Magallanes	Andy Tomberlin	J.R. Perdue
High A	Winston-Salem	Carolina	Joe McEwing	Robert Sasser	Bobby Thigpen
Low A	Kannapolis	South Atlantic	Ernie Young	Greg Briley	Larry Owens
Rookie	Bristol	Appalachian	Ryan Newman	Jerry Hairston	Curt Hasler
Rookie	Great Falls	Pioneer	Chris Cron	Eric Hollis	Brian Drahman

CINCINNATI REDS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Louisville	International	Rick Sweet	Adrian Garrett	Ted Power
Double-A	Carolina	Southern	David Bell	Ryan Jackson	Tom Browning
High Class A	Lynchburg	Carolina	Pat Kelly	Tony Jaramillo	Rigo Beltran
Low Class A	Dayton	Midwest	Todd Benzinger	Ken Griffey Sr.	Tom Fossas
Rookie	Billings	Pioneer	Delino DeShields	Alex Pelaez	Bob Forsch
Rookie	Goodyear	Arizona	Julio Garcia	Jorge Orta	Tom Browning

CLEVELAND INDIANS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach(es)	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Columbus	International	Mike Sarbaugh	Lee May Jr.	Charles Nagy
Double-A	Akron	Eastern	Joel Skinner	Jim Rickon	Greg Hibbard
High A	Kinston	Carolina	Aaron Holbert	Rouglas Odor	Tony Arnold
Low A	Lake County	Midwest	Ted Kubiak	Phil Clark	Mickey Callaway
Short-season	Mahoning Valley	New York-Penn	Travis Fryman	Dennis Malave	Ken Rowe
Rookie	Goodyear	Arizona	Chris Tremie	Anthony Medrano	Jeff Harris

COLORADO ROCKIES

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Colorado Springs	Pacific Coast	Stu Cole	Rene Lachemann	Doug Linton
Double-A	Tulsa	Texas	Ron Gideon	Dave Hajek	Bryan Harvey
High A	Modesto	California	Jerry Weinstein	Duane Espy	Darryl Scott
Low A	Asheville	South Atlantic	Joe Mikulik	Houston Jimenez	Dave Schuler
Short-season	Tri-City	Northwest	Fred Casio	Anthony Sanders	Joey Eischen
Rookie	Casper	Pioneer	Tony Diaz	Kevin Riggs	Craig Bjornson

DETROIT TIGERS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Toledo	International	Larry Parrish	Leon Durham	A.J. Sager
Double-A	Erie	Eastern	Phil Nevin	Glenn Adams	Ray Burris
High A	Lakeland	Florida State	Andy Bartlett	Larry Herndon	Joe Coleman
Low A	West Michigan	Midwest	Joe DePistino	Luis Quinones	Mark Johnson
Short-season	Oneonta	New York-Penn	Howard Bushong	Scott Dwyer	Jorge Cordova
Rookie	Lakeland	Gulf Coast	Basilio Cabrera	Andrew Graham	Greg Sabat

FLORIDA MARLINS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	New Orleans	Pacific Coast	Edwin Rodriguez	Steve Phillips	Scott Mitchell
Double-A	Jacksonville	Southern	Tim Leiper	Corey Hart	John Duffy
High A	Jupiter	Florida State	Ron Hassey	Robert Bell	Doc Watson
Low A	Greensboro	South Atlantic	Andy Haines	Kevin Randel	Charlie Corbell Jr.
Short-season	Jamestown	New York-Penn	Dave Berg	Frank Moore	Rigoberto Silverio
Rookie	Jupiter	Gulf Coast	Jorge Hernandez	Angel Espada	Jeff Schwarz

HOUSTON ASTROS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Round Rock	Pacific Coast	Marc Bombard	Keith Bodie	Burt Hooton
Double-A	Corpus Christi	Texas	Wes Clements	Mark Bailey	Travis Driskill
High A	Lancaster	California	Tom Lawless	Darryl Robinson	Don Alexander
Low A	Lexington	South Atlantic	Rodney Linares	Stubby Clapp	Rick Aponte
Short-season	Tri-City	New York-Penn	Jim Pankovits	Joel Chimelis	Gary Ruby
Rookie	Greenville	Appalachian	Ed Romero	Pete Rancont	Dave Borkowski
Rookie	Kissimmee	Gulf Coast	Omar Lopez	D.J. Boston	Rick Aponte

KANSAS CITY ROYALS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach(es)
Triple-A	Omaha	Pacific Coast	Mike Jirschele	Tommy Gregg	Doug Henry
Double-A	Northwest Arkansas	Texas	Brian Poldberg	Terry Bradshaw	Larry Carter
High A	Wilmington	Carolina	Brian Rupp	Justn Gemoll	Steve Luebber
Low A	Burlington	Midwest	Jim Gabella	Mar Ramirez	Jerry Nyman
Rookie	Idaho Falls	Pioneer	Brian Buchanan	Julio Bruno	Carlos Martinez
Rookie	Burlington	Appalachian	Nelson Liriano	Omar Ramirez	Unavailable
Rookie	Surprise	Arizona	Daryl Kennedy	A. David/J. Williams	C. Reyes/M. Davis

LOS ANGELES ANGELS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Salt Lake	Pacific Coast	Bobby Mitchell	Jim Eppard	Erik Bennett
Double-A	Arkansas	Texas	Bobby Magallanes	Francisco Matos	Ken Patterson
High A	Rancho Cucamonga	California	Keith Johnson	Damon Mashore	Dan Ricabal
Low A	Cedar Rapids	Midwest	Bill Mosiello	Brent Del Chiaro	Brandon Emanuel
Rookie	Orem	Pioneer	Tom Kotchman	Mike Eylward	Zeke Zimmerman
Rookie	Tempe	Arizona	Ty Boykin	Dick Schofield	Trevor Wilson

LOS ANGELES DODGERS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Albuquerque	Pacific Coast	Tim Wallach	John Moses	Jim Slaton
Double-A	Chattanooga	Southern	Carlos Subero	John Valentin	Danny Darwin
High A	Inland Empire	California	Jeff Carter	Franklin Stubbs	Charlie Hough
Low A	Great Lakes	Midwest	Juan Bustabad	Michael Boughton	Chuck Crim
Rookie	Ogden	Pioneer	Damon Berryhill	Johnny Washington	Kremlin Martinez
Rookie	Glendale	Arizona	Lorenzo Bundy	Leo Garcia	Glen Dishman

MILWAUKEE BREWERS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach(es)
Triple-A	Nashville	Pacific Coast	Don Money	Sandy Guerrero	Rich Gale
Double-A	Huntsville	Southern	Mike Guerrero	Al Leboeuf	John Curtis
High A	Brevard County	Florida State	Bob Miscio	Dwayne Hosey	Fred Dabney
Low A	Wisconsin	Midwest	Jeff Isom	Matt Erickson	Chris Hook
Rookie	Helena	Pioneer	Joe Ayrault	Ned Yost IV	Elvin Nina
Rookie	Phoenix	Arizona	Tony Diggs	Kenny Dominguez	Steve Cline

MINNESOTA TWINS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach(es)
Triple-A	Rochester	International	Tom Nieto	F. Rayford/R. Ingram	Bobby Cuellar
Double-A	New Britain	Eastern	Rudy Hernandez	Rudy Hernandez	Stu Cliburn
High A	Fort Myers	Florida State	Jake Mauer	Jim Dwyer	Steve Mintz
Low A	Beloit	Midwest	Nelson Prada	Tommy Watkins	Gary Lucas
Rookie	Elizabethton	Appalachian	Ray Smith	Jeff Reed	Jim Shellenback
Rookie	Fort Myers	Gulf Coast	Chris Heintz	M. Cuyler/R. Borrego	Ivan Artega

NEW YORK METS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach(es)	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Buffalo	International	Ken Oberkfell	Jack Voigt	Ricky Bones
Double-A	Binghamton	Eastern	Tim Teufel	Luis Natera	Mark Brewer
High A	St. Lucie	Florida State	Edgar Alfonzo	G. Greer/J. Carreno	Phil Regan
Low A	Savannah	South Atlantic	Pedro Lopez	R. Ellis/L. Rojas	Mark Valdez
Short-season	Brooklyn	New York-Penn	Wally Backman	B. Distefano/J. Fuentes	Rick Tomlin
Rookie	Kingsport	Appalachian	Mike DeFelice	J. Lopez/B. Malek	Jonathan Hurst
Rookie	St. Lucie	Gulf Coast	Sandy Alomar Sr.	Donovan Mitchell	Hector Berrios

NEW YORK YANKEES

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Scranton/Wilkes-Barre	International	Dave Miley	Butch Wynegar	Scott Aldred
Double-A	Trenton	Eastern	Tony Franklin	Frank Menecchino	Tom Phelps
High A	Tampa	Florida State	Torre Tyson	Greg Colbrunn	Greg Pavlick
Low A	Charleston	South Atlantic	Greg Colbrunn	Justin Turner	Jeff Ware
Short-season	Staten Island	New York-Penn	Josh Paul	Ty Hawkins	Pat Daneker
Rookie	Tampa	Gulf Coast	Tom Slater	Unavailable	Carlos Chantres

OAKLAND ATHLETICS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach(es)
Triple-A	Sacramento	Pacific Coast	Tony DeFrancesco	Brian McNair	Rick Rodriguez
Double-A	Midland	Texas	Darren Bush	Webster Garrison	Scott Emerson
High A	Stockton	California	Steve Scarsone	Tim Garland	Don Schulze
Low A	Kane County	Midwest	Aaron Nieckula	Haas Pratt	Jimmy Escalante
Short-season	Vancouver	Northwest	Rick Magnante	Casey Myers	Craig Lefferts
Rookie	Phoenix	Arizona	Marcus Jensen	Juan Dilone	Ariel Prieto

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Lehigh Valley	International	Dave Huppert	Gregg Gross	Rod Nichols
Double-A	Reading	Eastern	Steve Roadcap	Frank Cacciatore	Bob Milacki
High A	Clearwater	Florida State	Dusty Wathan	Kevin Jordan	Dave Lundquist
Low A	Lakewood	South Atlantic	Mark Parent	Greg Legg	Steve Schrenk
Short-season	Williamsport	New York-Penn	Chris Truby	Jorge Velandia	Lance Carter
Rookie	Clearwater	Gulf Coast	Roly DeArmas	Donnie Sadler	Chuck Hernandez

PITTSBURGH PIRATES

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach(es)	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Indianapolis	International	Frank Kremblas	Jeff Branson	Dean Treanor
Double-A	Altoona	Eastern	Matt Walbeck	Ryan Long	Tom Filer
High A	Bradenton	Florida State	P.J. Forbes	Dave Howard	Wally Whitehurst
Low A	West Virginia	South Atlantic	Gary Green	Edgar Varela	Jeff Johnson
Short-season	State College	New York-Penn	Gary Robinson	Brandon Moore	Mike Steele
Rookie	Bradenton	Gulf Coast	Tom Prince	R. Pena/W. Huyke	Miguel Bonilla

ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Memphis	Pacific Coast	Chris Maloney	Mark Budaska	Derek Lilliquist
Double-A	Springfield	Texas	Ron Warner	Derrick May	Dennis Martinez
High A	Palm Beach	Florida State	Luis Aquayo	Jeff Albert	Bryan Eversgerd
Low A	Quad Cities	Midwest	Johnny Rodriguez	Mitchell Page	Tim Leveque
Short-season	Batavia	New York-Penn	Dann Bilardello	Joe Krugel	Arthur Adams
Rookie	Johnson City	Appalachian	Mike Shildt	Ramon Ortiz	Doug White
Rookie	Jupiter	Gulf Coast	Steve Turco	Unavailable	Henderson Lugo

SAN DIEGO PADRES

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Portland	Pacific Coast	Terry Kennedy	Orv Franchuck	Steve Webber
Double-A	San Antonio	Texas	Doug Descenzo	Max Venable	Glenn Abbott
High A	Lake Elsinore	California	Carlos Lezcano	Bob Skube	Dave Rajisch
Low A	Fort Wayne	Midwest	Jose Flores	Tom Torrinca	Bronswell Patrick
Short-season	Eugene	Northwest	Greg Riddoch	Shawn Wooten	Tom Bradley
Rookie	Peoria	Arizona	Ivan Cruz	Kory Dehaan	Jimmy Jones

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Fresno	Pacific Coast	Steve Decker	Ken Joyce	Pat Rice
Double-A	Richmond	Eastern	Andy Skeels	Russ Morman	Ross Grimsley
High A	San Jose	California	Brian Harper	Gary Davenport	Jerry Cram
Low A	Augusta	South Atlantic	Dave Machemer	Lipso Nava	Steve Kline
Short-season	Salem-Keizer	Northwest	Tom Trebelhorn	R. Ward/D. McMain	Brian Cooper
Rookie	Scottsdale	Arizona	Mike Goff	Victor Torres	M. Caldwell/M. Garcia

SEATTLE MARINERS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Tacoma	Pacific Coast	Daren Brown	Alonzo Powell	Jaime Navarro
Double-A	Tim Laker	Southern	Tim Laker	Andy Fox	Lance Painter
High A	High Desert	California	Jim Horner	Tommy Cruz	Tom Dettore
Low A	Clinton	Midwest	John Tamargo	Terry Polreis	Dwight Bernard
Short-season	Everett	Northwest	Jose Moreno	Scott Steinmann	Rich Dorman
Rookie	Pulaski	Appalachian	Eddie Menchaca	Rafael Santo Domingo	Andrew Lorraine
Rookie	Peoria	Arizona	Jesus Azuaje	Andy Bottin	Gary Wheelock

TAMPA BAY RAYS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach(es)	Pitching Coach
Triple-A	Durham	International	Charlie Montoyo	Dave Myers	Xavier Hernandez
Double-A	Montgomery	Southern	Billy Gardner Jr.	Ozzie Timmons	Bill Moloney
High A	Charlotte	Florida State	Jim Morrison	Joe Szekeley	Neil Allen
Low A	Bowling Green	Midwest	Brady Williams	Manny Castillo	R.C. Lichtenstein
Short-season	Hudson Valley	New York-Penn	Jared Sandberg	Reinaldo Ruiz	Jack Giese
Rookie	Princeton	Appalachian	Michael Johns	Wuerner Rincones	Marty DeMerritt
Rookie	Charlotte	Gulf Coast	Joe Alvarez	D. DeMent/H. Torres	Darwin Peguero

TEXAS RANGERS

Class	Farm Club	League	Manager	Coach	Pitching Coach(es)
Triple-A	Oklahoma	Pacific Coast	Bobby Jones	Scott Coolbaugh	Terry Clark
Double-A	Frisco	Texas	Steve Buechele	Brant Brown	Jeff Andrews
High A	Bakersfield	California	Bill Haselman	Jason Wood	Dave Chavarria
Low A	Hickory	South Atlantic	Bill Richardson	Jason Hart	Brad Holman
Short-season	Spokane	Northwest	Tim Hulett	J. Perez/B. Dayette	Justin Thompson
Rookie	Surprise	Arizona	Jayce Tingler	H. Ortiz/O. Bernard	R O'Malley/J. Jaimes

Transactions

Number in parentheses indicates 2009 draft round.

ATLANTA BRAVES: Released C Mike Payne.

BOSTON RED SOX: Signed 1B Nomar Garciaparra. 1B Nomar Garciaparra voluntarily retired.

CHICAGO CUBS: Signed RHP Juan Serrano.

CHICAGO WHITE SOX: Signed RHP Orber Moreno.

CINCINNATI REDS: Released RHP Brandon Rice.

COLORADO ROCKIES: Signed RHP Rick Bauer and LHP Scott Rice.

DETROIT TIGERS: Released 3B Michael Hollimon.

HOUSTON ASTROS: Released RHP Bryan Hallberg, LHP Jarred Holloway and OF Jacob Priday.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS: Signed LHP Jose Sanchez. Released RHP Deybi de la Cruz, LHP Aneidy Toribio, 3B Josh Johnson and OF Shawn Griffin.

LOS ANGELES ANGELS: Signed RHPs Erik Gregersen (37), Jeremy Hill and Chad Orvella. Released RHP T.J. Kelly.

LOS ANGELES DODGERS: Signed RHP Ricky Rivas, LHPs Brandon Mann and Sean Thompson and OF Garret Anderson. Released RHP Kyle Wilson. Returned Rule 5 selection LHP Armando Zerpa to Red Sox.

MILWAUKEE BREWERS: Released RHP Ryan DeLaughter.

MINNESOTA TWINS: Signed RHPs Brad Hennessey and Yoslan Herrera.

NEW YORK METS: Signed RHPs Kiko Calero and Kyle Snyder. Released LHP Matias Carrillo.

NEW YORK YANKEES: Signed 1B Myron Leslie.

OAKLAND ATHLETICS: Signed RHPs Jason Jennings and Brett Tomko and OF Matt Carson. Returned Rule 5 selection RHP Bobby Cassevah to Angels.

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES: Signed 2B Keoni De Renne. Released RHP Reginal Simon.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES: Signed OF Jason Cooper. Released RHP Gerardo Esparza and LHP Chris Aure.

SAN DIEGO PADRES: Signed C Eric Munson.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS: Signed RHP Matt Kinney, LHP Andy Sisco, 3B Michael Sandoval and OF Nick Nordgren.

SEATTLE MARINERS: Signed RHPs Pat Bresnahan, Wes Littleton and Tom Wilhelmson. Released RHPs Jeff Breedlove, Tyler Brundridge and Terry Engles and 2Bs Ben Billingsley and Blake Trinklir.

TAMPA BAY RAYS: Signed 1B Hank Blalock.

TEXAS RANGERS: Signed RHP John Slusarz, C Toby Hall and OF Endy Chavez.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS: Signed OF Chris Aguila.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS: Signed RHP Livan Hernandez and 3B Luis Ordaz. Released LHPs Shawn Estes, Eddie Guardado and Jeff Ridgway and OFs Charlie Fennant and Aaron Seuss.

Obituaries

Jim Bibby, a righthander who pitched in the major leagues for 12 seasons for four teams, died Feb. 16 in Lynchburg, Va. He was 65.

Bibby reached the big leagues in September 1972 with the Cardinals after having pitched five seasons in the minors, though he'd also missed two years to serve in the Vietnam War. He'd gone 13-9, 3.09 for Tulsa (American Association) in '72 before the Cardinals made him a September callup. He made six starts and went 1-3, 3.38 in 40 innings for St. Louis down the stretch. Bibby opened the 1973 season with the Cardinals but was traded that June to the Rangers, where he had his first extended success at the big league level. He made 23 starts for Texas and posted a 9-10, 3.25 record. Included in that mark was a no-hitter he threw against the defending World Series-champion Athletics in Oakland on July 30th. He threw a career-high 264 innings for the Rangers in 1974 but had an up-and-down year, winning 19 games but also losing 19 with a 4.74 ERA.

The Rangers traded Bibby to the Indians during the 1975 season in the deal that sent Gaylord Perry to Texas. Bibby finished the '75 season with a 7-15, 3.88 record between his two stops, but was more successful in his first full season in Cleveland in 1976, going 13-7, 3.20. After a 12-13, 3.57 season in 1977, Bibby signed with the Pirates as a free agent heading into 1978 and would go on to have his greatest success in Pittsburgh. He went 8-7, 3.53 for the Pirates in '78, splitting his time between the rotation and the bullpen. Working in the same utility capacity in 1979, Bibby had his best big league season for the Pirates' World Series winners, going 12-4, 2.80 in 138 innings. Most notably, Bibby started Game 7 of the '79 World Series against the Orioles, allowing one run on three hits over four innings.

Bibby made his first and only trip to the All-Star Game in 1980 during a season in which he went on to win 19 games and put up a 3.33 ERA in 238 innings. After going 6-3, 2.49 in 94 innings in 1981, a shoulder injury cost Bibby the entire 1982 season and he struggled to a 5-12, 6.69 record for the Pirates after returning in 1983. He signed as a free agent with the Rangers after the season, but was released after making only eight appearances and posting a 4.41 ERA in 1984. The Cardinals signed him but kept him in the minors the rest of that season and Bibby retired afterwards, ending his career with a 111-101, 3.76 record. After his playing days ended, Bibby had a long career as a minor league pitching coach. Bibby was the older brother of Henry Bibby, a former professional basketball player who spent nine seasons in the NBA, and the uncle of current Atlanta Hawks point guard Mike Bibby.

Paul LaPalme, a lefthander who pitched seven seasons in the majors in

the 1950s, died Feb. 7 in Leominster, Mass. He was 86.

LaPalme broke into pro ball with Bristol (Appalachian) in 1941 and went 10-4, 4.50 in his debut season, but he would later lose the 1943-45 seasons to serve in the military. LaPalme didn't show any rust upon returning to Bristol in 1946, putting up a sterling 20-2 record with a 3.16 ERA in 191 innings. LaPalme began working his way up the minor league ladder from there, winning 13 games with a 3.00 ERA for Trenton (Inter-State) in 1948 and 14 games with a 2.90 ERA for Hartford (Eastern) in 1949. He reached the big leagues for the first time with the Pirates in 1951, getting called up in the middle of the season and making 22 appearances, most of them in relief. LaPalme pitched 54 innings as a rookie, posting a 1-5, 6.33 record. He spent part of the 1952 season back in the minors, but continued to spend most of his time working out of the Pittsburgh bullpen with more success in his second year than his first, going 1-2, 3.90 in 60 innings.

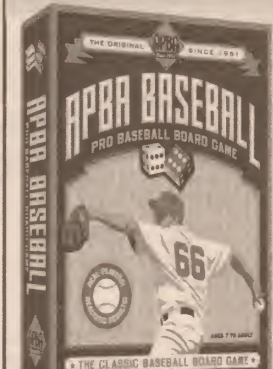
LaPalme, a knuckleballer, transitioned to the Pirates' rotation in 1953 but had a rougher go of it. LaPalme put up an 8-16, 4.60 record in his first extended look as a big league starter, although his eight victories were tied for the second most on a Pittsburgh squad that lost 104 games and finished in the basement of the National League. LaPalme split the 1954 season between starting and relieving, going 4-10, 5.50 in 121 innings as the Pirates again finished last in the NL. The Pirates traded LaPalme to the Cardinals after the '54 season and he had his best year in a big league uniform in his first season in St. Louis, working exclusively out of the bullpen and posting a 2.74 ERA in 92 innings to go with a 4-3 record. However, his stay in St. Louis didn't last much longer, as he was traded to the Reds shortly into the 1956 season, only to be waived a few weeks later and get picked up by the White Sox. LaPalme had struggled with Cincinnati, but turned his season around in Chicago, going 3-1, 2.35 the rest of the way. LaPalme remained in Chicago for the 1957 season and had a respectable 3.38 ERA over 35 relief appearances, but he was sent back to the minors after the season and didn't get another look at the big leagues. LaPalme pitched two more years in the minors before retiring after the 1959 season.

Anyone with an obituary to contribute may contact Carle at 909 SW Corine Court, Lee's Summit, MO 64081, or at blbxp@aol.com.

Minor league obituaries may also be e-mailed to Nemer at baseballray@aol.com.

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Records through Monday, March 15, 2010. Ties not included.

RK.	SCHOOL	W-L	LAST WEEK	PREV.
1.	Virginia	12-3	3-1	1
2.	Texas	13-3	5-0	3
3.	Georgia Tech	13-1	3-0	4
4.	Texas Christian	12-2	4-0	7
5.	Florida State	13-2	3-2	5
6.	Florida	11-3	4-1	6
7.	Louisiana State	13-2	2-2	2
8.	Coastal Carolina	15-2	5-1	8
9.	Louisville	14-1	3-1	10
10.	Arizona State	15-0	4-0	11
11.	Clemson	13-1	4-0	12
12.	UCLA	13-0	4-0	15
13.	Arkansas	12-3	4-1	14
14.	Rice	10-7	3-2	9
15.	UC Irvine	9-6	3-1	16
16.	South Carolina	11-4	5-0	19
17.	Miami	10-4	3-1	20
18.	Oregon State	10-3	3-0	21
19.	Vanderbilt	14-1	4-0	24
20.	East Carolina	8-6	1-3	13
21.	Mississippi	12-4	3-2	18
22.	Kentucky	13-2	4-1	22
23.	Stanford	7-4	0-0	23
24.	North Carolina	12-4	2-3	17
25.	Oklahoma	15-2	4-1	25

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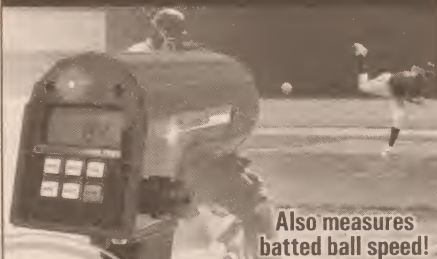
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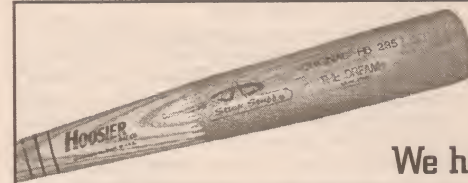
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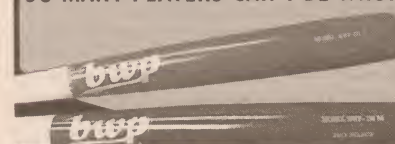
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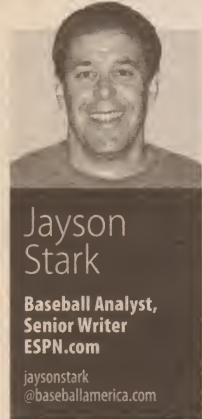
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Strasburg lives up to hype, and creates more, in spring debut



Jayson Stark

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VIERA, FLA.

His cleats reached the mound at 1:03 p.m., Eastern Strasburg Time, as John Fogerty was warbling over the PA system: "Put me in, Coach. I'm ready to play." And boy, was Stephen Strasburg ever ready to play.

A guy gets to make his major league debut only once. So for America's Phenom, this was a moment that couldn't come fast enough. A Nationals jersey on his back. Tigers leadoff man Austin Jackson standing 60 feet away. A press box packed with observers from all over the continent.

"All the craziness, all the hype, all the anticipation—it's all over with," America's Phenom said after posting his first two big league zeros on the old scoreboard. "It's in the books."

This being spring training, those books won't count, of course. But these two shutout innings—featuring a couple of soft singles and two eyeball-popping strikeouts—they will sure count in the memory bank of a 21-year-old from San Diego.

"Obviously, when you're a kid, you dream of pitching in the big leagues," Strasburg said. "I know it's spring training, but it's big league spring training, and you're facing guys like Miguel Cabrera—veteran players who have had a lot of success in the big leagues. So it was a great experience."

Counting On The Kid

But that experience was only part of this story. It's also the beginning of another journey—the journey of a franchise that needs to ride Strasburg's electrifying talent back to a place the rest of us know as "relevancy."

It's a franchise that lost 103 games last year and posted a scary 5.02 team ERA. It's also a franchise that got off to a 0-7 start this spring and had been outscored in the process by the UConn-women-like margin of 76-34. Oh, and one more thing: All the pitchers in the Nationals' camp who are not named Stephen Strasburg had allowed opposing hitters to hit .396 this spring. Yep, .396.

So for the Nationals, this wasn't just another day in the life of spring training. This was, for all intents and purposes, the day they reappeared on baseball's radar screen.

"We were all excited," pitching coach Steve McCatty said. "Everybody was into it. It was great."

Considering this was the first time Strasburg had thrown a pitch to big league hitters, it was one dazzler of a show.

"Now that," one scout in attendance said, "is worth \$15 million."

"He's the real deal," another said. "A special talent, with huge upside."



All eyes were on Stephen Strasburg in his spring training debut. "Now that is worth \$15 million," one scout in attendance said

And those two men were the lucky ones. They didn't even have to hit against the guy. But Cabrera did. The Tigers first baseman is one of the great hitters of our time, an almost Pujols-esque talent when he holds a bat in his hands. But against Strasburg, Cabrera never even put a ball in play.

Fouled off a 97 mph smokeball. Buckled on an 81 mph curveball. Swung through a sailing 98 mph flameball.

"What you read about, it's true," Cabrera said afterward. "It's real. He's the kind of pitcher you don't see every day."

Strong words. But Cabrera was just getting started. Asked about how the ball roars out of Strasburg's smooth, slo-mo delivery, Cabrera delivered the spring training quote of the year: "When he throws the ball, it's like an explosion."

All The Pitches

On the way into the ballpark, it was easy to be skeptical about whether the kid on the mound can possibly be as good as the hoopla. Then you see it, and you're sold.

Count Tigers manager Jim Leyland in that group, too. Couldn't wait to see this act in person—"Been reading about it since two years ago," Leyland said.

Two shutout innings later, Strasburg had another convert.

Leyland called Strasburg's fastball "electric," and raved about the 90-91 mph changeups on back-to-back pitches to third baseman Don Kelly. "But I was more impressed with the breaking ball," Leyland said. "A lot of guys now are throwing 96-97. Not many have the breaking ball to go with it. That's a very

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TRIVIALITY

It's only trivial if you don't know the answer.

The Rays boasted four No. 1 overall picks in spring camp: Tim Beckham (2008), David Price ('07), Pat Burrell ('98), and Matt Bush ('04) in minor league camp. Of the 15 No. 1's in anybody's camp this spring, only two other teams have more than one on the roster. Can you name them?

» **WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?:** Of the 15 No. 1 picks in camp, only seven have made an all-star team (Ken Griffey Jr., Alex Rodriguez, Josh Hamilton, Adrian Gonzalez, Justin Upton, Joe Mauer, Chipper Jones). Four have won an MVP award (Griffey, A-Rod, Mauer, Jones). And it's been more than 25 years since an overall No. 1 pick won a rookie of the year award (Darryl Strawberry in 1983).

TRIVIALITY ANSWER: The Twins with Joe Mauer (2001) and Delmon Young (2003) and the Royals with Luke Hochevar (2006) and Bryan Bullington (2002).

gifted young man. I was very impressed with him." Couldn't blame him. Who isn't?

You Decide

But luckily for Leyland, he was the manager in this game who didn't have to decide what to do with this guy. And that decision, for Washington, is the hardest part of employing a pitcher like this. How do the Nationals resist the temptation to tell their most talented pitcher he belongs in Harrisburg, not in D.C.?

"A guy like that, he's probably not long for the minors," Leyland said. "Now it's none of my business what somebody else's plans are. But from what I saw, he's not long for the minors."

Five years ago, the man who played third base behind Strasburg was even younger the day he reached the big leagues. Ryan Zimmerman was 20 years and 11 months old—and less than three months removed from draft day—when he arrived, as another hyped No. 1 pick. It was an awesome experience—and one Zimmerman wouldn't wish on anybody.

Asked whether he enjoyed having all that hype accompanied him to the major leagues, Zimmerman didn't blink.

"No," he replied. "I hated it. You're so scared to do anything wrong when you first get called up, you just want to sit at your locker and kind of blend in. But for him, it's hard to blend in when there's 30 people at his locker every day."

In the minor leagues, Zimmerman said, at least this guy would get a chance to live the daily grind of professional baseball, to find out what works and what doesn't, to work on his weaknesses before all the big league scouts and number crunchers could broadcast them to the rest of the universe.

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